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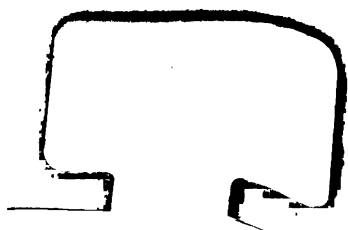
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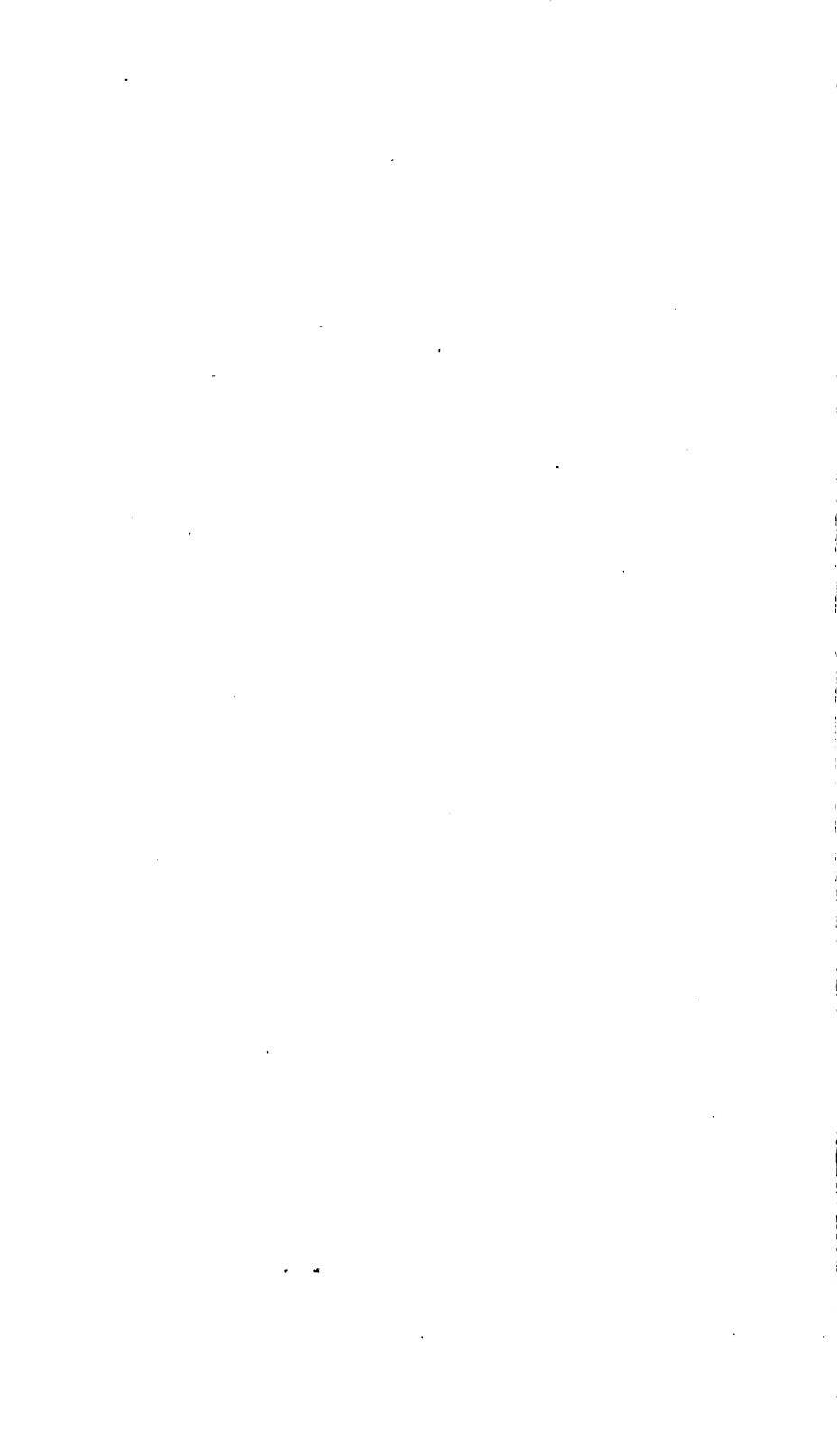


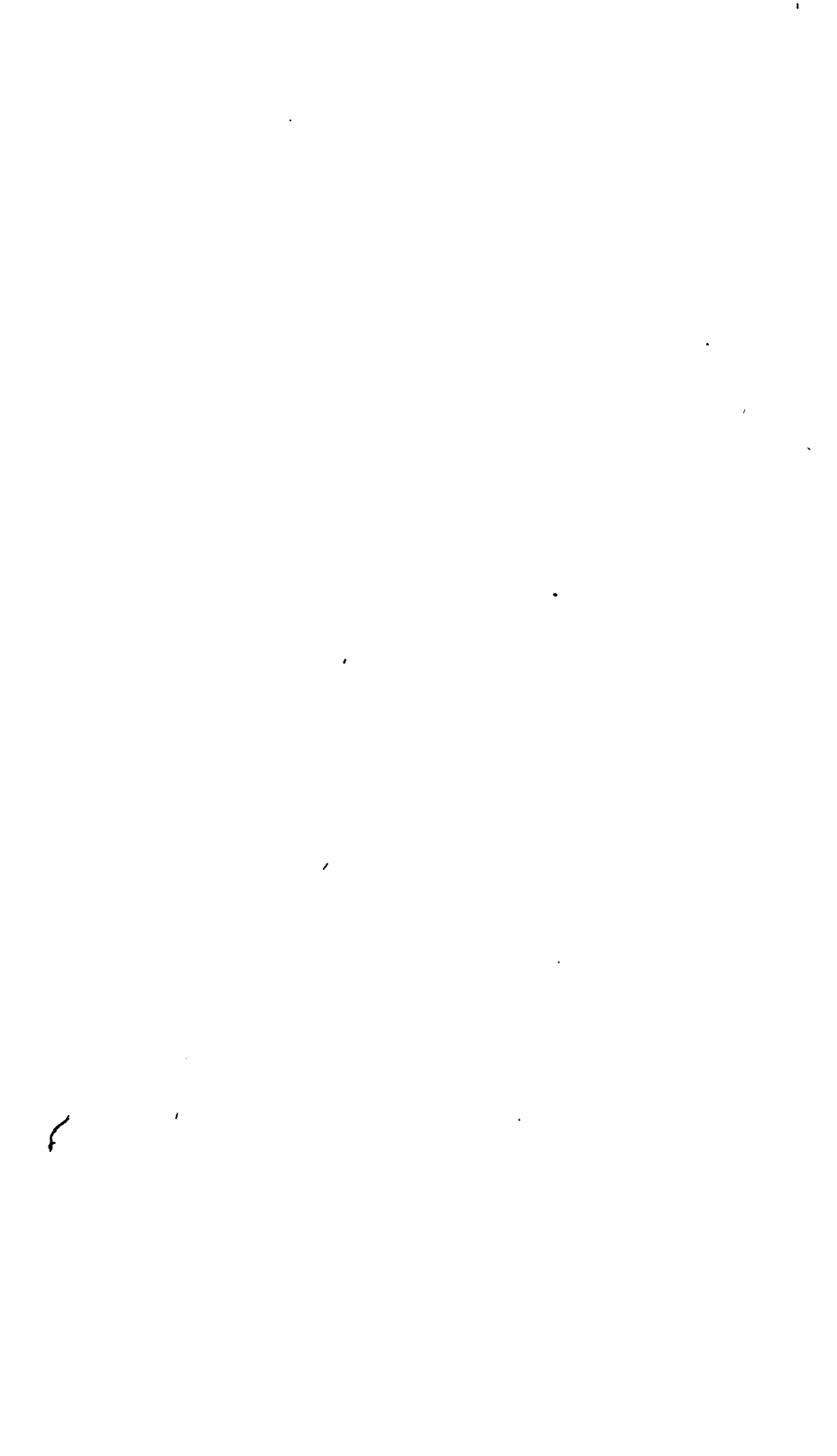
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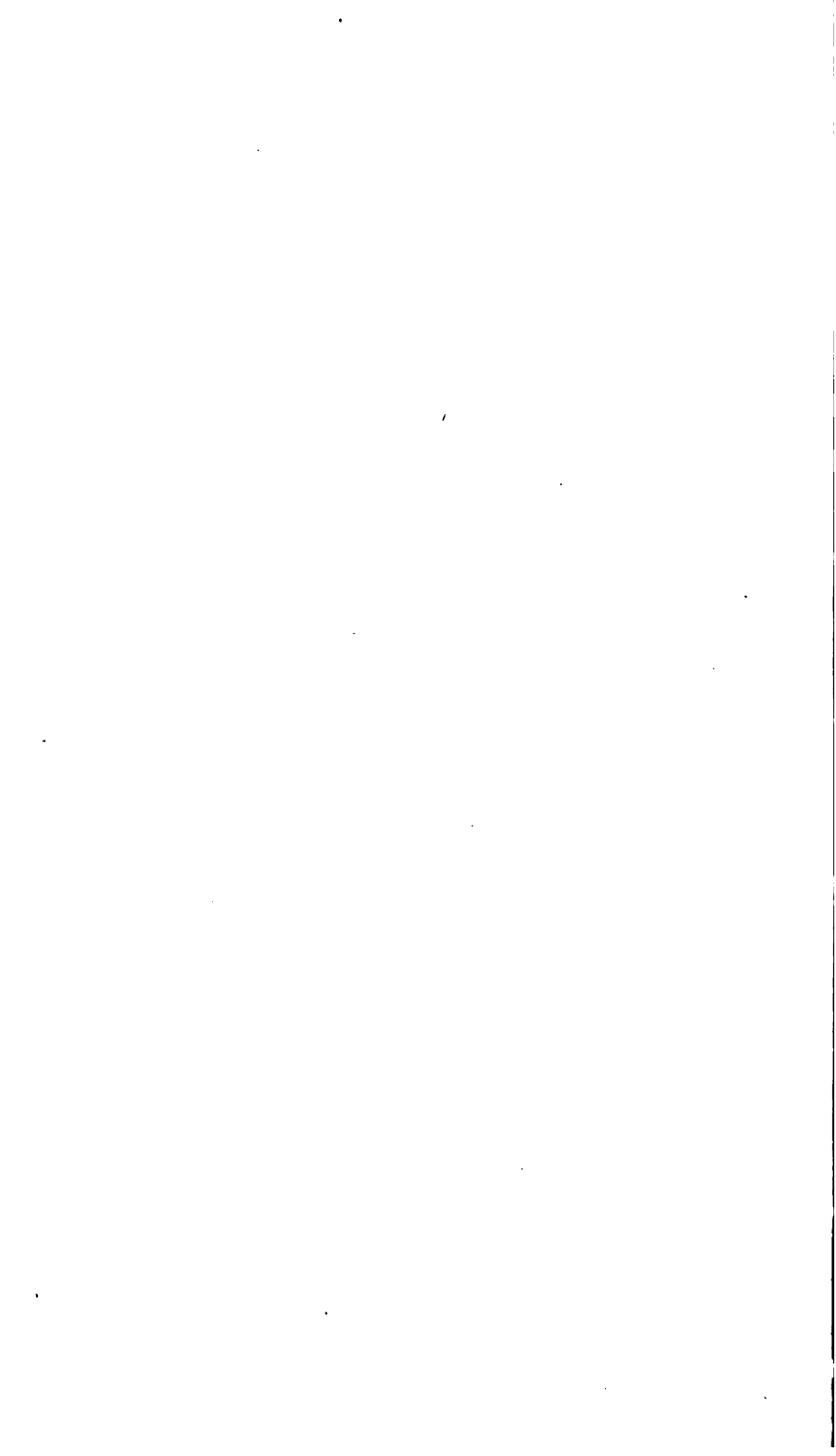


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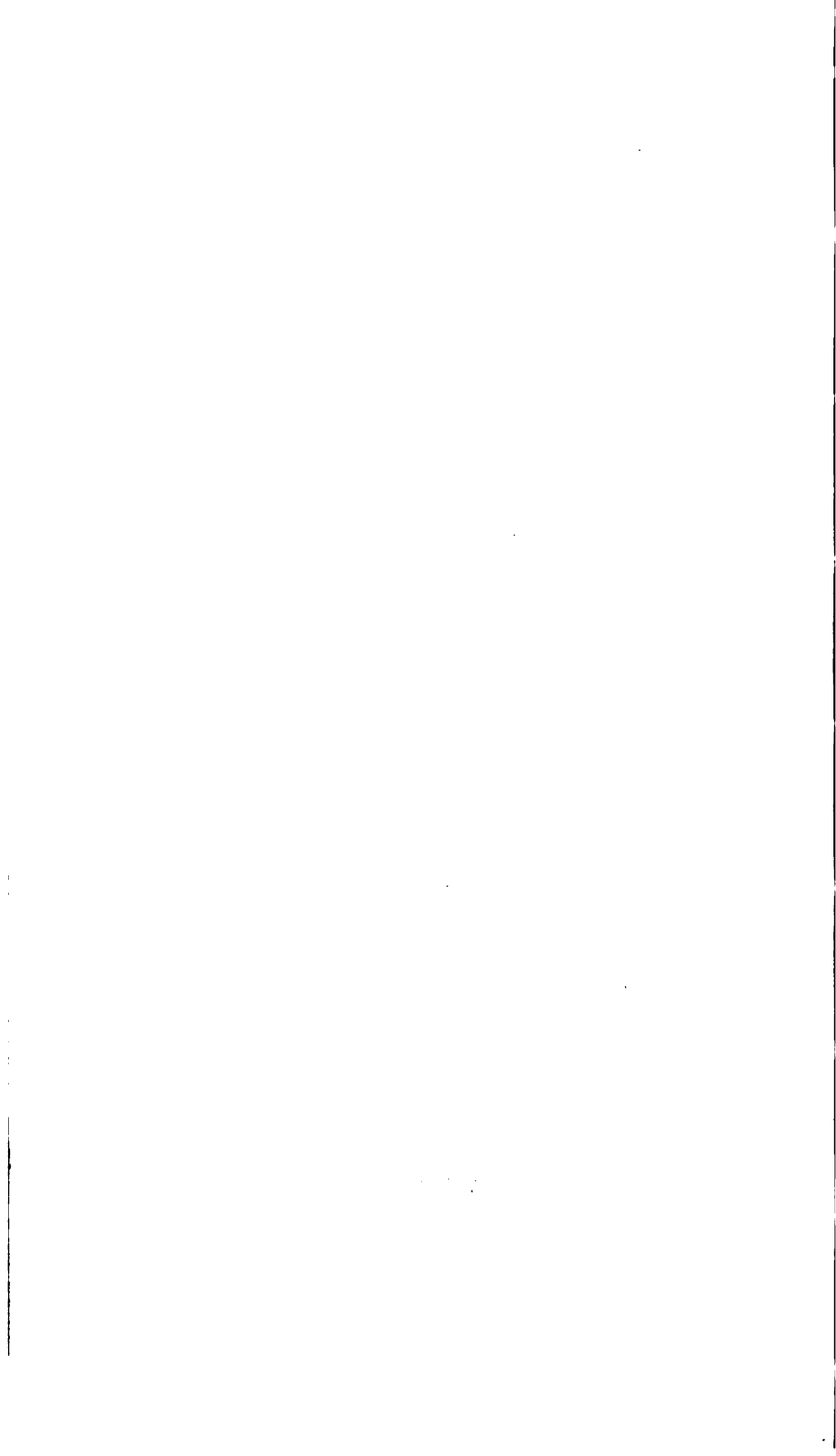


Agnes Sorol and Chivalry in  
the XV. Century.



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**Bibliotheca Curiosa.**  
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AND  
Chivalry in the XV. Century,  
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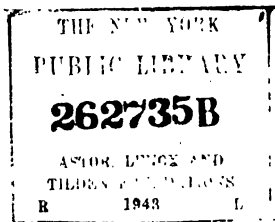
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BY  
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F.S.A. (Scot.)

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**IN TWO VOLUMES.**  
VOL. I.  
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# AGNES SOREL

AND

Chivalry in the XV. Century.



I.

**Isabeau of Bavaria. The Madness of  
Charles VI. Gentle Odette.**

(1390-1400.)

On the 13th of July 1385, was celebrated in the Cathedral Church of Amiens, the marriage of Charles VI. and Madam Isabella or Isabeau of Bavaria. The King was at that time seventeen years of age, and a knight of a brave and noble character. He had already distinguished himself in battle in Flanders and Normandy. In the skirmish at Rosbecque, he had been seen, though

Handwritten notes in the left margin, including the word "Isabeau" written vertically.

quite a boy, dispersing a body of Flemish brewers led by their chief, Arteveld. He had checked the rising of the halles of Paris, which had been organised under the butchers Legoys, Sanctyon and Thibert. These worthy townspeople and workmen had imagined that they would cause consternation among the knighthood of Charles VI., by collecting to the number of more than 20,000, armed with bows, bludgeons, and long swords, between the Saint Denis gate, and the enclosure of Saint Lazare. The King told them to be off instantly, and take their arms and equipments with them. They obeyed without a sign of resistance.<sup>1</sup> He snatched their disorganised power from the hands of the surgeon-barber Capeluche, (afterwards the public executioner) and of the butcher Caboche, the favourite of the rabble.<sup>2</sup>

From the miniatures of the manuscripts, we know that Charles had a slightly pale face, large eyes, arched eye-brows, and a childish and smiling mouth. He was always high principled, cheerful

<sup>1</sup> One of the five miniatures of Froissart's MS. in the National Library, shows this martial deed of the townspeople of Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Compare "La Chronique de Saint Denis" for years 1391-1400 and Juvenal des Ursins, *ibid.* The "Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris," only begins at the year 1402. The learning of Le Laboureur and Secousse, of the academy of inscriptions, has thrown much light on the reign of Charles VI.

in speech, but not given to express his feelings. This arose from his having long been under the tutelage of the constable of Clisson, the gravest knight of the Breton race.

The Princess Isabeau of Bavaria, who now became the King's wife, was the daughter of Stephen II., Duke of Bavaria, and Prince Palatine of the Rhine.<sup>1</sup> Her mother was Tadie Visconti of Milan. Isabeau of Bavaria had in her veins both German and Italian blood, that is to say, the noblest and purest of all.

Her beauty was something wonderful. Of more than middle height, she had blue eyes, dark eye-lashes, and, by a peculiar gift of Heaven, her hair was of a golden hue. In a miniature she is seen presented to the young King by the Duchess of Burgundy; her hair is arranged high on her head, her veil, thrown behind her, falls below her slender waist. Her dress of blue brocade comes down and touches her pointed shoes, according to the fashion of the day. Voluptuous grace breathes in her whole person. Brautôme, who wrote a century later, says of Queen Isabeau of Bavaria—"She is praised for having introduced into France the grandeur and elegance of attire which lend a superb grace to ladies' dress." She

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Chronicles, Charles V. had, on his death bed, advised an alliance with Germany.

#### AGNES SOREL.

had been brought to Amiens on a pilgrimage by Duke Frederick of Bavaria. King Charles VI. had seen her as she knelt before the Virgin : he had fallen hopelessly in love with her,<sup>1</sup> and their nuptials were celebrated with great pomp in the Cathedral of Amiens.

Queen Isabelle, lovely above all others, introduced into the life of the chateaux a spirit of luxury and pleasure, and most brilliant personal adornment. There was rivalry between her and the Duchesses of Burgundy and Berri, the Countesses of Bar and of Nevers, the ladies of Coucy and Touraine. The most magnificent entertainment was the entry of the Queen into Paris for her coronation at Notre Dame. The Middle Ages carried the grandeur of these solemnities to a great pitch, especially as regarded shows and processions. The start was made, therefore, from Saint Denis in a litter covered with cloth of silver. The young Queen was surrounded by a most brilliant escort of knights : along the whole route twelve hundred well-known burgesses, with red, blue, and green head-dresses, welcomed her. At the Saint Denis gate little angels, who issued from a beautiful cloud,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This pilgrimage had been arranged like an interview. Isabelle was born in 1371. She was therefore fourteen years of age.

<sup>2</sup> This description of the fêtes of Paris is found in

amused themselves by playing with little rattles made out of hollow nuts. In the Rue Saint Denis young girls, dressed in cloth of gold, were seated near a fountain draped in blue, and while they offered wine and hippocras,<sup>1</sup> they sang in a

the Chronicle of Saint Denis. Juvenal des Ursins is more serious; the miniatures in the Froissart manuscript give us a representation of these fêtes.

<sup>1</sup>A medicated drink, composed usually of red wine, but sometimes white, with the addition of sugar and spices. It is not improbable, that, as Mr. Theobald observes, in a note on the "Scornful Lady," it was called *Hippocras*, from the circumstance of its being strained; the woollen bag used for that purpose being called, by the apothecaries, *Hippocrates's sleeve*. It was a very favorite beverage, and usually given at weddings.

"P. Stay, what's best to drink a mornings?

R. *Ipocras*, sir, for my mistress, if I fetch it, is most dear to her." *Honest Whore*, iii., 283.

"Drank to your health, whole nights, in *Hippocras*,

Upon my knees, with more religion

Than e'er I said my pray'rs, which heav'n forgive me." *Antiquary*, x., 28.

In old books are many receipts for the composition of Hippocras, of which the following is one:

"Take of cinamon 2 oz. of ginger  $\frac{1}{2}$  an oz. of grains a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an oz., punne [pound] them grosse, and put them into a pottle of good-claret or white wine, with half a pound of sugar; let all steep together, a night at the least, close covered in some bottle of glasse, pewter, or stone; and when you would occupy it, cast a thinne linnen cloath or a piece of boulder over the mouth of the bottle, and let so much run through as

melodious voice, with a choir of angels—

“Notre dame des fleurs de lys,  
Soyez reine du Parisis :  
De France, de ce beau pays  
Nous retournons au Paradis.

Then the seraphim were wafted towards the cloud  
of blue and gold.

you will drink at that time, keeping the rest close,  
for so it will keep both the spirit, odor, and virtue of  
the wine and spices. And if you would make but a  
quart, then take but half the spices aforesaid.”

*Haven of Health*, ch. 228, p. 264.

By a pottle is meant two quarts. See also Strut's  
“View of Manners, &c.,” vol. iii. p. 74.

“To make *Hypocras* the best way—Take 5 ounces of  
aqua vitæ, 2 ounces of pepper, and 2 of ginger, of  
cloves and grains of paradise each 2 ounces, amber-  
grease three grains, and of musk two grains, infuse  
them 24 hours in a glass bottle on pretty warm embers,  
and when your occasion requires to use it, put a pound  
of sugar into a quart of wine or cyder; dissolve it well,  
and then drop 3 or 4 drops of the infusion into it, and  
they will make it taste richly.”

*Lupton's Thousand Notable Things*.

“The wind blows cold, the weather's raw,  
The beggars now do skulk in straw,  
Whilst those whose means are somewhat higher,  
Do warm their noses by a fire.  
Sack, *Hippocras* now, and burnt brandy,  
Are drinks as warm and good as can be;  
But if thy purse won't reach so high,  
With ale and beer that want supply.”

*Poor Robin*, 1696.

—See Nares' “Glossary.”

Thus no one was so popular as Queen Isabelle, who was soon to be the mother of sons and daughters, the heirs of the lineage of France ; the people dreamed of nothing but chivalry and entertainments, pilgrimages and tournaments. Palestine, Italy, Brittany, Normandy, had each to be visited and conquered, and the young King found himself continually making progresses on horseback. The large number of seditions and conspiracies that had burst out around him made his life one of sadness and distrust. He passed from extreme gentleness to acts of violent passion, and this to such an extent that it was already whispered everywhere, "Can our Sovereign Lord be out of his wits?" At the time of his expedition into Brittany a particular circumstance occurred to aggravate his condition. When already exhausted by the scorching rays of the sun and the fatigue of a long journey, a man with unkempt beard, and in strange garments, stood before him, and, grasping his horse's bridle, cried out, "Oh King, you are being betrayed!"

The king thought it was a kind of apparition ; seizing his sword with both hands, he struck out right and left.<sup>1</sup> They seized him as they would a

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<sup>1</sup> According to Juvenal des Ursins, he killed four knights with his own hand before he could be stopped. (Chronicle of the year 1391.)

raving maniac. He was taken in a close carriage to Paris, to the castle of Tournelles, and then to the old Louvre,<sup>1</sup> where he continually showed a sad, restless, and pre-occupied frame of mind. From time to time he returned to a state of cheerfulness and pleasure that were parts of his character, and especially agreeable to the tastes of the coquettish and smiling Queen Isabeau.<sup>2</sup>

Ballets and masques by torchlight were at that time in great vogue. One evening when the King and some young lords of the court were disguised as savages all covered with sheep-skins, people crowded round them in a familiar manner. The fleeces took fire and soon the clothes of the savages were in flames, and they became actual human torches. Nothing but a miracle saved the King. Some one threw a cloth over his head, wrapped him in it, and pressed it close to his body.<sup>3</sup> His life was saved, but his madness became now of a sad and melancholy type, for he entertained suspicions of treason. The Council, which was composed of his uncles of Burgundy and Berri, determined to shut

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<sup>1</sup> The Louvre was a prison tower built by Philip Augustus in 1204. It afterwards became a library, and Charles VI. made it his palace in 1364.

<sup>2</sup> Chronique de Saint Denis 1392.

<sup>3</sup> In the year 1394 (at the carnival of the month of March.)

Charles VI. up in the castle of the Louvre in the most profound solitude. He refused to see his Queen Isabella, his uncles or his children, and declined all nourishment as if it had been poisoned. To distract his thoughts, they brought him some loose women; one only of their number, a young girl who waited on the King, was able to acquire a gentle ascendancy over him. Her name was Odette de Champvillers. Her father was a horse-dealer and frequently came the Louvre on business. The King had conceived such a love for her that he obeyed her caprices, like a child obeys the laws of a master. Charles VI. was twenty-five years old, Odette seventeen. She played on the lute, and knew the tales and stories of chivalry. Surrounded with images and illuminated manuscripts, Odette taught the King the games of cards<sup>1</sup> and Pope Joan, which Jacquemin Gringonneur, a painter and illuminator of Paris, presented to him. The cards reproduced the whole history of the heroes of chivalry — the Knights of the Sword and of the Cup, Otger the Dane, the Duke Nayme of Bavaria, so celebrated among the twelve fabulous peers, the noble spouses of Charlemagne, knaves of hearts, clubs,

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<sup>1</sup> These gilded cards were paid for at the rate of 56 sous Paris to a man named Gringonneur (account of the treasurer, Charles Poupart).

spades, and diamonds, named after some great paladins.<sup>2</sup>

This pleasant game was the only thing capable of amusing the poor King Charles VI, who, from time to time, recovered his reason. The Bibliothèque has in its possession the Pope Joan cards, which are said to have been used by him.<sup>1</sup> These cards are in a wonderful state of preservation. In the first place, we have the Pope on his throne, with two cardinals, then the Emperor in a Byzantine character, the hermit, the house of God, the knight with his fair hair, the jester, the lover, the man on the gibbet with two purses in his hand, the moon and the astronomer, the sun and the spinner who counts the hours, justice, strength, temperance, fortune that guides the world, Death on horseback with his gracious smile, for he rides apace ; the last judgment where are assembled the fairest models of form, women of most entrancing charms—and all this produced in the style of Giotto. One of the caprices of the wretched madness of the King was his casting a thousand

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<sup>1</sup> Father Menetrier has said, without giving proofs, that playing cards were invented by Jacquemin Gringonneur ; they existed before. They are mentioned in the "Chronique du petit Jehan de Saintré," cap. 15, of the time of Charles V.

<sup>2</sup> The collection of playing cards in the Bibliothèque Nationale is magnificent.

reproaches at his Queen Isabeau. He could no longer endure the sight of her, although she had been so beloved by him, and notwithstanding that she had given him a noble posterity. One might say that, like the story found in the *chansons de geste* of Britany, he had drunk at the waters of the spring of hatred, which caused him to conceive a horror for the woman he had loved most of all. This tradition was in later times borrowed by Ariosto in describing the loves of Orlando and Angelica.

On the other hand, it was said that the Queen, the lovely and coquettish Isabelle of Bavaria, forgot the poor King amidst pleasures and dances, in her palace at the corner of the old Rue du Temple and of the Rue Barbette, which she had just purchased. There she gave receptions to the Dukes d'Orleans and their gayest companions. It was in fact a Court quite separate and distinct from that of the Tournelles and of the old Louvre. The strangest rumours were abroad concerning the Queen's behaviour; we must, however, remember that at this time the country was in the midst of civil war, and that the Burgundians and Armagnacs hated each other cordially. Now, the favourite weapon of partisans is calumny. ✓

## II.

**Regency and Government of France  
during the King's Madness.**

(1400-20.)

Isabella, through her marriage with the King, had issue eleven children, of whom six were boys. The eldest was Louis, the Dauphin of France, Duke of Guienne, the second John, and the third Charles. According to the custom of the capital, the Regency ought to have belonged to the mother and to the first prince of the blood, the Duke of Orleans, brother of the King. The madness of Charles VI. being, however, but an intermittent malady, and seeing that he had lucid intervals of reason, it was decided that there should be simply a government by family arrangement, in which the King's uncles, the Dukes of Burgundy and Berri, were to have a share.<sup>1</sup> This act amounted to the placing of anarchy in the very seat of authority, and the sad consequences soon showed themselves. The Duke of Burgundy, who was already so powerful by his feudal possessions, became master of the Council,

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<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Register, 1401. The edition of Juvenal des Ursins, Paris, 1614, 4to, may be consulted, along with the annotations by the scholar Godefroi.

by reason of his faculty of currying favour with the popular interests, and a great party was formed of which he was the centre.

The chivalry of France had indeed lost much of its prestige since the sad defeats of Poitiers and Crecy, where it had shewn but undisciplined courage. From this dates the development of the bourgeois or popular power. The multitude in the Paris markets had been dominant in the state by their frequent tumults and revolts during King John's captivity; they still cherished the remembrance of this, and the orderly and almost constitutional reign of Charles V had further contributed to the downfall of chivalry. A transformation had even been introduced into the military spirit. Companies of armed mercenaries had replaced the old feudal bands, so that the leaders of these companies once so popular, were driven to seek for power in the management of State affairs. This had not escaped the notice of John, Duke of Burgundy; bent on forming a party, flattering especially the corporations, the guilds, and popular leaders of the Paris Halles, he had made the multitude thoroughly Burgundian in sympathy. In this way he was enabled to govern with the assent of the populace.

He did not stop at a deed of violence and bloodshed, the assassination of the Duke of

Orleans.\* This young prince was leaving Queen Isabella's mansion in the Rue Barbette: it was eight o'clock in the evening, the curfew had tolled and the streets were deserted. The Duke, who was the King's brother, was only attended by some pages or lacqueys. A band of armed men rushed upon him with axes and daggers, and left him lifeless on the street. Some days later the Duke of Burgundy came forward and boldly declared that the deed had been done by his orders to avenge the King's honour, and to relieve the people of Paris. The Duke's action was applauded, and he took into his hands the government of the State. The Duke of Orleans was the embodiment of the old spirit of chivalry which was gradually disappearing. Queen Isabella had backed up his love for splendour, entertainments and pleasures. He was accused of foolish extravagance to the detriment of the poor people. One of the curés of Paris (the great tribunes of the people at this time), in the presence of the Queen herself, who was adorned with precious stones and braided velvet, cried out, "Doubtless I should like to please you noble Queen, but I prefer your welfare to the fear your anger

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\* This murder took place on the night of the 23rd November 1407. There is still shown a tower of the palace of Queen Isabella at the corner of Rue Barbette. This, however, I consider must belong to a later date.

may cause me ; Venus is the only goddess that reigns at your court, luxury and drunkenness turn night into day, and are mingled with licentious dances. These accursed and infernal revels beset your court, enfeeble your morals, and prevent the knights and squires enervated as they are from setting out her warlike expeditions from fear of being deprived of some of their limbs."

These complaints formulated against the Queen, raised the popular feeling against her. At this moment the power of the Dukes of Burgundy found a rival. Death had laid low the two eldest sons of the King, the Dauphin, Louis, and after him, John ; thus Charles, the third of the children, became the direct heir to the throne, and took in turn<sup>1</sup> the title of Dauphin. Charles obtained for a little the direction of the Council by placing all his confidence in the marshall of Armagnac. Hence are derived the names which were given to the two great factions that divided the country, the Burgundians and the Armagnacs,—the former consisting of all the elements that are found in the passions of the people, and the halles of Paris, the latter having as leaders the Dauphin and the captains of the companies of men-at-arms, most of them brave adventurers, but undisciplined and

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the Dauphin appeared by itself in the statutes (Collect. des Lois par de Cruzy 1400-1410.)

intensely hated by the people. In a seditious rising, the Armagnacs were massacred, the standard of Burgundy was planted in the popular quarters of Paris, and the Dauphin protected by the captains of the companies, was carried off from the vengeance of the Burgundians, and sought an asylum in the provinces of the Loire, in the beautiful castles of Touraine.

King Charles VI., who was all this time shut up alone in the old Louvre, only interfered occasionally with public affairs. Not that he had no lucid moments and a certain will of his own, but it is more than probable that the princes who were at the head of the government exaggerated the gravity of his complaint in order to remain in power themselves. The Burgundians had removed from his reach everything calculated to enlighten or direct him; they enfeebled his fiery temperament by every kind of weakening influence. Odette was no longer the sole mistress of his senses, for many loose women were, as I have said, introduced into the Louvre.<sup>1</sup> The King had been maddened into anger against his wife, Isabeau of Bavaria, whom the Dauphin had caused to be shut up in a lonely tower, in consequence of

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<sup>1</sup> Compare, on the subject of the King's malady, the Chronicle of Saint Denis for the year 1417; Monstrelet, p. 1, No. 112. Monstrelet is the most exact of the chroniclers, and is almost an *archivist*.

her debaucheries, as was said. Isabelle had spent many wretched days there; she remembered them. At the very moment that she protested lively gratitude to the Burgundians, who had set her at liberty, she conceived the greatest contempt and hatred for the leaders of the great companies—namely, Tanneguy Duchatel, La Hire, Dunois, the successors of Armagnac, who surrounded the Dauphin and directed his will.<sup>1</sup>

Isabelle of Bavaria, in allying herself with the Burgundians, had recovered a certain popular ascendancy over the halles of Paris. She neither resided at the Tournelles nor at the Louvre, but in her house in the Rue Barbette. Now somewhat aged, she had renounced her luxurious life, in order to please the preachers of the parish and the holy monks of the Blancs Manteaux and of the Célestins in the Rue Saint Antoine. Madame Isabeau was henceforth the popular idol, under the guardianship of the sword of the Duke of Burgundy, and she became so even more when

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<sup>1</sup> The learned Secousse and Laboureur have discussed at length the murder of the Duke of Burgundy at Montereau. They have added nothing to what has been said by Philip of Commines, the Chronicle of Saint Denis, and Monstrelet. In a modern book there is an empty and pretentious work on the gloomy event which took place in 1419 as a vengeance for the death of the Duke of Orleans.

she made her appearance in the Rue du Temple with a black veil on her head, her hair in disorder, at the moment that the fatal news reached their ears—The Duke John of Burgundy had just been assassinated on the bridge of Montereau.

Who were to blame? The Armagnacs, the Dauphin, or the officers who were his intimate friends? Of this no one had a doubt. Whether it was the Dauphin himself or the leaders of the great companies, Tanneguy, Le Boutellier, Pierre Frottier, this crime had none the less been committed in some way under the safe conduct of the Prince. He accordingly was alone to blame and responsible for it. The grief displayed in Paris when the death of the noble Duke was learned, and his body lay shrouded in the common bier in the church of Montereau, cannot be expressed. The artisans and guilds, exasperated beyond measure, were prepared for anything that would constitute an act of hatred and violence against the Dauphin.

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### III.

#### **Power of England in France. Treaty of Troyes.**

(1301-1414.)

The struggle between France and England was a very old one and had existed since Philip Augustus had conquered Normandy, and subju-

gated Guienne as a feudal possession. To these deep-set rivalries there came to be added a question of succession of very great gravity in feudal law and one which concerned what was called the Salic law. Now, what was the Salic law? Was it a written code? Who was the chronicler of the first or second race that made mention of it? According to the general feudal law women succeeded to ancestral rights just as much as barons themselves, and at the coronation of Philip the Fair, Mahaut of Flanders had sat amongst the Peers, with the coronet of a countess on her brow.<sup>1</sup> The following are the circumstances under which this question of the Salic law arose.

Philip the Fair left three sons, Louis, Philip, and Charles, and a daughter Isabelle who was married to Edward II of England. Louis, the eldest, surnamed *Le Hutin*, lived only for a short time, leaving a daughter, and the Queen *enceinte*. Philip, the second son of Philip the Fair, took the Regency till the confinement of his brother's widow, but the son that was born survived his birth but a short time. In this interval, Philip, called the Long, had himself crowned at Rheims with the doors of the church closed<sup>2</sup> and then came to Paris

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<sup>1</sup> The words "De quo taliqui indignati fuerint" are, however, added by the continuator of Nangis.

<sup>2</sup> 4 January 1317.

where an assembly of prelates, barons and burgesses declared with all haste that "no woman could succeed to the crown of France." Philip in his turn died, leaving only daughters. His brother Charles succeeded him, and after him the grandson of Philip the Hardy, since Philip de Valois.

In the midst of this rapid succession to the throne, the King of England, Edward III, thrusting aside the principle of the Salic law, which he pretended was an invention and a usurpation, laid claim to the crown of France through his mother, who was the fourth child of Philip the Fair. Edward was a brave knight, and one of surpassing power, and he commenced war in support of his claim<sup>1</sup> accompanied by his famous son, the Black Prince, Buch, Chandos, Felton and Lancaster. This campaign was fatal to France. Crecy, Poitiers, fatal fields where the chivalry of France was overcome by the unerring aim of the English archers! "In truth, the English archers gave their side great advantage, for their flights of arrows were

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<sup>1</sup> Tunc etiam declaratum fuit quod in Franciæ regno mulier non succedere. Guill. Nangis, 1317. Spicilegium of father d'Achery.

<sup>2</sup> These claims are found set forth at length in a writ addressed by Edward III. to the bishop of Worcester (Rymer Fœdera, vol. iv. p. 314).

so thick that the French did not know where to turn, whilst the English crept forward and gained ground little by little." King John fell into the hands of the enemy, and the sad treaty of Bretigny, the veritable division of France, was signed in the midst of the excesses of the Jacquerie<sup>2</sup> and the

<sup>2</sup>Jacquerie, derived from the name Jacques Bonhomme, familiarly applied to the rural population of France, is the name given to insurgent risings on the part of the peasantry against the nobility. The most important of these outbreaks was that which broke out in 1358. At this time the condition of France was miserable in the extreme. Civil and foreign wars had sapped its strength, and plague and famine had followed in their train. The French king, John II. the Good, was a prisoner in the hands of the English, civil war raged in France itself, the people of Paris had risen in rebellion, and were striving to establish a free commune, when, in May, 1358, in the neighbourhood of Clermont and Beauvais, the peasantry also rose and commenced a war upon the nobles and gentry. Driven to desperation by hunger and the shameful wrongs they had so long endured, they sought to destroy all their oppressors, and to this end they burnt every castle and feudal house they captured, killing the nobles and their children, and violating their wives and daughters. The insurrection spread like fire among the rural population, and in a few weeks immense mischief was wrought. The nobles, however, made common cause against them; and while besieging Meaux they were on 9th June completely routed by Captal de Buch and Gaston Phœbus, count of Foix. This defeat was followed by the wholesale slaughter of all who could be captured, and the

revolt of the Paris Halles. King John, and for him the Dauphin (afterwards Charles V) recognised the absolute sovereignty of England over Guienne, Gascony, Poitou, Saintonge, Limousin, Angoumois, Calais and the county of Ponthieu.<sup>1</sup> John was left with the mere fragments of the ancient kingdom of France; a crown crushed by the gripe of the leopard.

But shortly after, the treaty of Bretigny was cast aside like a yoke: Charles, aided by the Bretons, under the conquering sword of Duguesclin had chased the English from Guienne, Poitou and Normandy. But under the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV. Kings of England, the English, taking advantage of the civil wars, and the madness of Charles VI., landed once more on the continent. It seemed left to Henry V. to complete the work of Edward III. That King with his followers invaded Normandy, and in his advance on Calais gained the fatal victory of Agincourt. Alas! all the flower of French chivalry fell on that mortal field. Bushels of gold spurs, the mark of chivalry, were carried into the tent of Henry V., who was

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insurrection was completely suppressed, though its results were long remembered.

<sup>1</sup> The treaty of Bretigny is dated October 24, 1360. M. de Breguigny of the Académie des inscriptions has satisfactorily cleared up the history of this time.

so proud of his victory, that he made the following proposition to the Council of Henry VI. The King of England was to be recognised as King of France, and if there were any difficulty, pending the settlement of these claims, he demanded<sup>1</sup> Normandy, Touraine, Maine and Guienne together with the homages of Brittany and Flanders. The Council of France proposed to grant him Guienne and Saintonge with the hand of the princess Catherine and a dowry of eight hundred gold pieces.<sup>2</sup>

This was the state of the negotiations when the Duke of Burgundy was assassinated at Montereau, in presence, if not by the orders of the Dauphin; one can scarcely imagine the public grief produced, especially at Paris, by the news of this murder. There arose in the halles a feeling of indignation against the Dauphin who was declared the author of this crime. The townsfolk, the parliament, and the university joined in a common vow of vengeance, and the presence of the heir of the Duke of Burgundy, dressed in mourning, caused all to unite in pronouncing solemnly the forfeiture of his rights by the murderer of the noble John on the bridge of Montereau. The English, who

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<sup>1</sup> Act found in Rymer, vol. ix., p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> As to these negotiations, consult throughout the "Foedera" of Rymer, vol. ix., p. 34, 138, 304: nothing can exceed the insolence of Henry the fifth's style towards the Dauphin.

were now masters of Normandy, had their outposts at Pontoise; the Duke of Burgundy, their ally, had already recognised Henry V. as lawful King of France. It was in the midst of these circumstances of political indignation and general misery that the treaty of Troyes was signed.

This treaty was negotiated by Queen Isabella of Bavaria and the Duke of Burgundy, the accredited agents of Charles VI. The first clause related to the marriage of Henry VI., King of England, with Madame Catherine of France.<sup>1</sup> In consequence of this marriage, the throne of France was to pass into his hands by virtue of his claim to the inheritance of Charles. "Until his death, however, the government would be placed under the sceptre of the said King of England, Henry V., as if this right belonged to him by uncontested inheritance, in spite of the pretended Salic law."

~~This Treaty of Troyes~~, so daring, was not an act of isolated will, a capricious concession on the part of Isabella of Bavaria; it was not merely applauded by the artizans of Paris, but also proclaimed by the University and approved by a meeting of the States General which declared the right of Henry V. to the Crown of France.<sup>2</sup> At

<sup>1</sup> The treaty of Troyes is dated the month of May, 1420.

<sup>2</sup> Rymer, in his "Fœdera," Vol. x. p. 30, gives all the acts of the new royalty of Henry V. There is

Paris all Statutes were sealed with the seal of the new King, Henry V. ; the Duke of Burgundy did him homage ; some popular ordinances drew the good feelings of the masses to the Government. Isabella of Pavia, far from being blamed for having excluded the Dauphin, her son, from the succession to the Throne, recovered her popularity by the Treaty of Troyes. She became again the idol of the citizens, as she had been in her balmy days : her residence was the centre of gaiety and pleasure and extravagant masquerades. When Madame Catherine, daughter of the King of France, went to rejoin her husband, the King of England, there were festivities in every quarter. When she gave birth to a son, he was treated as the Dauphin, and the guilds wrote to London to congratulate the King of England. At last on the death of the weak and unhappy Charles VI., not a soul in the provinces of the north of France, in Normandy, in Flanders, in Burgundy or in Paris, was found to raise a voice against the proclamation of the Parliament that hailed Henry V. by the title of King of France. When the rabble have conceived a strong hatred against a power which they have banished, the nature or

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also found among them the Act of the English Parliament, which registers its adhesion to the Treaty of Troyes.

character of the government that takes its place matters little to them : they accept it, proclaim it, and serve it with all the hatred they bear towards the power they have themselves proscribed.

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IV.

**The Court of the Dauphin (afterwards  
Charles VII.) The Great Companies.**

(1420-1424.)

After the violent deed on the Bridge of Montereau, resulting in the murder of John Sans Peur, Duke of Burgundy, the Dauphin's cause seemed lost. Charles found shelter at Bourges, an ancient city in the centre of France, which had always held aloof from the popular movement. The Dauphin's authority did not extend beyond Amboise and Chinon, except in some towns in the south of France. Condemned to exclusion by the treaty of Troyes, disinherited by the will of Charles VI., disowned by his mother, proscribed by the Parliament of Paris and the vote of an Assembly of the States, the Dauphin was now only known as the Roitelet de Bourges ; and while the populace of Paris and the three orders acclaimed Henry VI. King of France in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, seventeen knights all told were found grouped round the Dauphin in the Castle of Espally, and lifting their swords

to proclaim Charles, Dauphin of France, King of the country. His seal henceforth was marked with three fleurs de lys, whilst Henry VI. quartered the lilies on the arms of England.<sup>1</sup> What a wretched and sad Court was that at Bourges! ✓ Their privations were so great that the King never had a full meal, even on the royal feast days.

“Une jour que La Hire et Poton<sup>2</sup>  
Le vinrent voir par festolement,  
N'avait qu'une queue de mouton  
Et deux poulets tant seulement.”

The only military forces of Charles VII. consisted in the chiefs and captains of the Great Companies of adventurers and armed men, who had him completely under their control. Tanneguy du Châtel, of good Breton race, a former Mayor of Paris, who had rescued the Dauphin and afterwards treacherously done away with the Duke of Burgundy at Montereau, was a perfect constable to the King.<sup>3</sup> Then another adventurer, a leader

<sup>1</sup> On the situation of Charles VII. at Bourges, compare the book entitled “Vigiles de Charles VII.,” Monstrelet, Froissart, and Juvenal des Ursins, 1420 to 1424.

<sup>2</sup> Poton de Xaintrailles.

<sup>3</sup> Tanneguy du Châtel had been the contemporary and chamberlain of the Duke of Orleans, who was murdered in the Rue Barbette; he was Mayor of Paris, and Charles VII. appointed him Marshal of

of one of the Great Companies, Stephen Vignole, better known under the name of "La Hire" (this name, or rather soubriquet, came perhaps from *Ire*, anger), and whose portrait used to be seen on playing cards, was also one of the King's followers. La Hire belonged to the province of Guienne, and had been robbed of his fiefs by Henry VI. In return, he vowed the deepest hatred against England. At the head of a large band of armed men of Gascony he had prosecuted the war with vigour; fourteen of these brave southerners put to flight a company of one hundred archers of Wales, a deed of heroism which caused a great sensation.<sup>1</sup> The most noble friend of Lahire, a leader of a great company like himself, was Jean Poton, lord of Xaintrailles (or Soulte Treille), likewise belonging to the proud and hardy Gascon race.<sup>2</sup> "Then they made two squires, who were with them, captains, Stephen of Vignole, called Lahire, and Poton de Xain-

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Guienne in 1420. The Duchatels of the present day, an honourable and middle class family, have nothing in common with the Tanneguy du Châtel.

<sup>1</sup> Lahire, whose renown was great, died at Montauban in 1442. His name in playing cards is the knave of hearts. Father Ménestrier, with little regard for accuracy, says he was the inventor of playing cards ("Bibliothèque Curieuse du père Ménestrier").

<sup>2</sup> Xaintrailles was a simple gentleman, without land.

trailles." The Gascon race was always the same —of high courage, but somewhat braggart. These intrepid and predatory bands carried terror into the English and Burgundian forces. "They consisted then of no more than forty lances, who spared neither themselves nor their horses. They were for the most part Gascons, who are excellent and sturdy horsemen."<sup>1</sup> Scouring the open country right and left in search of adventures, they were sometimes fighting hand to hand; Sometimes, shut up in their castles, they pounced like a flight of eagles on their prey. Xaintrailles, like Lahire, has earned the glory of seeing his face depicted on playing cards.<sup>2</sup>

Jean Dunois also found great favour with these bands of adventurers; a bastard by birth, and son of Louis of France, Duke of Orleans, who was killed in the Rue Barbette, he had neither fiefs, nor estates, nor lands, but cherished an unconquerable hatred against the Burgundian faction. He had not been the last to raise his hand at the murder on the bridge of Montereau and Valentine de Milan (Duchess of Orleans), had not formed a bad judgement of him, when, after the assassination of the Duke of Orleans, she gathered her

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<sup>1</sup> Froissart, and the Monk of Saint Denis, 1410.

<sup>2</sup> Xaintrailles died at Bordeaux in 1461. He had married Catherine of Salignac.

children, not excepting the fair bastard, round her, and said, "Here is Jean, Count of Dunois, your brother; I only regret that he is not my son. Jean<sup>1</sup> has been denied to me, he ought to have belonged to me, for no one is better fitted than he to avenge his father's death." These words, sacredly cherished in his breast, had borne their fruit; there was in the heart of Dunois a measureless amount of hatred against the Burgundians; of this he had given proof at the bridge of Montereau, by avenging himself on the Duke of Burgundy.

Thus Dunois, Lahire, Xaintrailles, Tanneguy with their brave hearts and practised arms, formed all the court of Charles VII; they brought with them, it is true, an unsurpassed courage, but few resources. They possessed neither castles, nor fiefs, nor lands, nor silver, nor property. They were but brave adventurers, who gave nothing but their arms to the cause they wished to serve; but often, in history, success remains with adventurers, who, without calculations, without plans, stake their fortunes on chance, and their lives on the cast of a die. Charles VII. was reproached by the followers of the house of Burgundy, and by

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Dunois, Count of Orleans and Longueville, was son of the Duke of Orleans, and Mariette d'Enghien. He was born on the 25th November 1402: he rejoiced in his title of the Bastard of Orleans, and wore the *fleurs de lys* as his cognizance.

the English for allowing himself to be ruled by these knights-errant of fortune. But could he have done otherwise? The "Roitelet of Bourges," with all his great vassals against him, was compelled to court fortune, for want of substantial advantages, with legends of youth, of victory, and of glory!

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V.

**The Breton, Scotch, and Lombard  
Auxiliaries of Charles VII.**

(1320-1420.)

With this wandering band of knights, without fiefs or money, King Charles VII. could never have hoped for success in a sustained struggle against the English and Burgundians unless auxiliaries had come to his help with considerable forces, national hatred, and profound feelings of jealousy against his enemies. Such auxiliaries were at first found in the Bretons, who had an instinctive repugnance to the Saxo-Norman race.

These feelings dated from long ago. It was in vain that the powerful sword of Charlemagne had striven to unite the Bretons and Normans under a single Count or Duke. The Bretons had fretted under the yoke, and their proud independence had been roused against the Norman race that ruled England. In all the wars which the Kings

of France had had to wage with the English and the Gascons<sup>1</sup> the standard of the Dukes of Brittany had been proudly placed by the side of the Sovereign when he marched against the English, and it had again been seen in the deliverance of the country under Charles V.

The splendid embodiment of the Breton nationality was at that time the Constable, Bertrand du Guesclin. In this noble and sacred soil of Brittany, where the history of great persons mingled with myth and legend, the origin of *du Guesclin* was found in the prophecies of the enchanter Merlin, and the *Chansons de Gestes* of Charlemagne.<sup>2</sup> We find even that his renown had been great in Castille, Gascony, and in France, and always as the foe of the English.

"A lui n'était chevalier comparable  
De prouesses son vivant, ce dit-on  
Ne qui tant fust ni bon ne convenable  
Pour gouverner le bon peuple charton  
Or il est mort Dieu l'y fasse pardon  
Qu'il plust a Dieu qu'il vecust encore

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most faithful chroniclers of this reign is William the Breton, who has written a complete poem on the King of France.

<sup>2</sup> The *Chansons de Gestes* said he was descended from a Moorish King of the name of Aquin established in Brittany, where he had built a castle to which he gave the name of Glay, from which we have Glay Aquin (du Guesclin).

Pour defendre du leopard felon  
L'escu d'azur a trois fleurs de lys d'or."<sup>1</sup>

The war waged against the English by the Constable du Guesclin in the reign of Charles V., is a noble monument of devotion to the crown of France. It was the more bitterly waged that hatred of the English seemed innate in the Breton race. Less than a century before the Chateaux of France had resounded with the fame of a glorious combat between thirty Breton and thirty English knights: An ancient MS. in the National Library thus describes the famous deed:

"Seigneur, or faisons paix, clers et barons,  
Bannerets, chevaliers, bacheliers et trestous nobles  
hommes,  
Evesques, abbés et gens religieux  
Heraults et menestrels, et vous bons compagnons  
Gentilshommes et bourgeois de toutes les nations  
Ecoutez ces roumans que dire nous voulons.  
L'histoire en est vrai et les dire en sont bons  
Comment trente Anglais hardis comme lions  
Combattirent en un jour contre trente Bretons."

Amongst the knights whose names have been

<sup>1</sup> MS. 7595. Biblioth. Nationale. The following verses descriptive of Guesclin's coat of arms are still extant.

"L'ecu d'argent a un aigle de sable  
A deux têtes et un rouge baton  
Portant le preux, le vaillant conetable  
Qui de Bertrand Guesclin avoit le nom.

preserved as having taken part in this struggle, are to be found the Bretons, Roger de Beaumanoir, the Sire de Tintiniac, Guy de Rochefort, Henri de Saint-Yvon, Guillaume de Montauban, Alain de Keravrai, Louis de Goyon, Jean de Serent, and Geoffroi de la Marche, whose coats of arms are all given by the author.

Amongst the English who fought most bravely, are named Robert Bembroke, Robert Knox, Rupeforte Hennequin, Hugo le Gaillard, Gannelon, John Russell, and others. The fight was long and bloody, owing to the hatred of the combatants.

This hatred still survived and led the Bretons to assist Charles VII against the English masters of France. A few concessions of feudal dignities, and the raising of their valiant Duke to the dignity of Constable of France, sufficed to bind the Bretons to Charles VII.

The other race, the mountaineers of Scotland and the sworn foes of England, had fought Henry V. on the very soil of England; and when the Regency of Scotland, after the reign of James I., saw the power of Henry in France increasing and developing, and the crown of the country passing to his successor, it did not hesitate to offer its support to Charles VII., that Prince whom the English contemptuously nicknamed the Roitelet de Bourges. Accordingly, six thousand

brave Scots came to join the French adventurers, led by the Earl of Douglas, a man descended from an illustrious family, and to whom Charles VII. gave the Duchy of Touraine.<sup>1</sup> Among the Scottish chiefs, we find also Stewart of Darnley, who became so celebrated, and to whom Charles VII. gave the lands of Aubigny.<sup>2</sup> Trustworthy followers had to be secured for the battles about to be fought with England, who was now mistress of Paris and of all the north of France. Accordingly Charles VII. gave the Scots everything he could, even to his last fiefs.

From the first moment that the Scottish guards made their appearance in France, every year witnessed the departure from their highlands of bands of these brave companions on their way to take service under the King.<sup>3</sup> In France they found relatives, friends, protectors, lands, and fiefs. This was the origin of the company of Scottish guards in the household of the King of France. But another source of succour presented itself from an unexpected quarter, namely Italy.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas was made lieutenant-general, a dignity which was above that of Constable, 1421.

<sup>2</sup> The lands long remained in the family.

<sup>3</sup> This custom still continued in the reign of Louis XI., whence Walter Scott has taken his Quentin Durward.

Jacobo Sforza, a *condottieri* leader, had made himself master of the Duchy of Milan,<sup>1</sup> and of the chief cities of Lombardy. When his power was established, and he himself recognised by Charles V., he was able to dispense with his troops of followers, which were composed of brave men, accustomed to the hardships of war, and it was one of these large guerilla bands, which Ludovic Sforza, Jacobo's son, sent to Charles VII.

The forces of the King of Bourges were composed of several elements. Firstly, there were the leaders of the Gascon and Touraine men-at-arms, brave but unable alone to obtain victory. Secondly, the Bretons, profoundly jealous of the English, and as brave as the Gascons, but obstinate, and exacting in the concessions they obtained from their sovereign. Thirdly, the Scots and Lombards who had to be paid in money or in land, although the King had scarcely any provinces of his own, and even these were wavering in their allegiance, with the exception of the Dauphiné, which yielded itself a ready instrument in the levying of imposts. It was in fact a faithful domain of the French crown. Among these three mutually hostile forces, who could be found to take the leadership? Was the constable or

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<sup>1</sup> He was the first of the Sforzas who was called Attendolo, and was born in the humblest rank of society, in 1369.

commander-in-chief to be chosen from among the men-at-arms, the Bretons or the Scots in the expeditions that were to be undertaken against the English?

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VI.

**The Courts of Bourges and Chinon.  
Charles VII.'s Alliance with the House of  
Anjou. Arrival of Agnes Sorel.**

(1420-1427.)

Charles VII., while still Dauphin of France, had married Marie of Anjou, a lady of that illustrious house that claimed connection with Provence, Naples, and Sicily.<sup>1</sup> Marie had had as father Louis II., Duke of Anjou, and as mother Iolanthe, daughter of the King of Brittany; her favourite brother was that unfortunate René of Anjou, possessing an excellent heart, a poet, a good musician, and an illuminator of MSS., of whom Provence has long cherished the memory. The Counts of Anjou were the last Princes of that race of *trouvères* and troubadours whose songs, like that of Petrarch, formed the epic crown of the Middle Ages. A sister of Marie of Anjou had married François de Montfort, Duke of Brittany, and René himself was engaged to the

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<sup>1</sup> Louis II. of Anjou was King of Naples and Sicily.

heiress of the house of the Dukes of Lorraine. It was impossible to find a more splendid alliance than that of the house of Anjou. Queen Mary was thus destined to help in no small way the agreement between Charles VII. and the great feudatories, and thus 'eventually to bring about his restoration.

Besides her high birth and breeding, the young Queen had an active and versatile character, and a deep love and devotion for the young King, to whom she had just borne a fair young Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI. No character could be more submissive or more resigned. Never did she utter a complaint against Charles VII. "He is my lord," she used to say; "he has a right to guide all my actions, and I have none." Notwithstanding that the King was then miserable and abandoned by all, yet the Queen Marie of Anjou brought him the support of the inhabitants of Touraine, of Brittany, and of Lorraine, and all the Southern districts. With her active and intelligent character, the Queen made herself the negotiatrix among her relatives for alliances against the English, whom she hated like a true Angevine.

The retinue of the Queen, according to the custom of all the house of Anjou, was a veritable court of chivalry. Tournaments and love affairs were the staple and constant occupations of her

attendants. We here find a reflection of those festivities which René of Anjou, Count of Provence, invented later for the town of Aix. René's wife, Isabelle of Lorraine, was not the least fair and charming of ladies; she had brought among her maids of honour a young lady of the name of Agnes. Her family name differed in pronunciation according to the dialectal difference in Anjou, Orleans, or Burgundy. Some called her Soreau, others Sorel, or even Soret. Her real name was Soreau, for she was the daughter of Jean Soreau, Lord of Codun, squire of the Count of Clermont, and her mother was Catherine de Meignelai,<sup>1</sup> a noble and illustrious family of Touraine. Agnes had when quite young entered in the service of Madame Isabelle of Anjou-Lorraine, who had taken a great liking for her and had brought her up, and loved her, so that she had given her much land and gear.<sup>2</sup>

Such is our first information regarding the origin of Agnes Sorel. After comparing dates and facts, we can place the time of Agnes's birth between 1409 and 1410. She was therefore, when she followed the Queen of Sicily to the Court of Bourges, about sixteen or seventeen years old.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Agnes was born in 1409 in the village of Fromenteau, in Touraine.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Chartier.

<sup>3</sup> She was then called *Mademoiselle de Fromenteau*.

It was at the time of the captivity of the good René of Anjou in the hands of the Duke of Burgundy, when he painted the illuminated portraits on glass of the Dukes Jean and Philip.

Agnes's features have been very imperfectly preserved to us, but still we can discover from them that her forehead was high and open,<sup>1</sup> her eyes blue and piercing, surmounted by long eyelashes and languishing lids, her nose of perfect shape, and her mouth small. Her neck, shoulders, and bosom were of perfect symmetry and snowy whiteness.

"Agnès, la belle Agnès deviendra le surnom  
Tant que de la beauté, beauté sera le nom."

And with all this beauty she had the gentlest spirit in the world, "and her eloquence was so much beyond that of other women that she was looked upon as a prodigy." It is impossible to tell precisely when the King first fell in love with Agnes Sorel. Their interviews have remained a mystery. Not very long since, in the ruins of the castle of Chinon, were shown the subterranean vaults that lent their shadows to these midnight interviews.<sup>2</sup>

What was the influence of Agnes Sorel on the

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<sup>1</sup> Collection of portraits and engravings (Biblioth. Nat.) There still exists a bust of Agnes.

<sup>2</sup> I believe this account to be very doubtful.

destinies of Charles VII., and what part did she take in the deliverance of France? We have glorious traditions on this point, and we shall afterwards examine how far they are to be trusted. At no period was the situation of Charles VII. more gloomy than at the moment of the appearance of Agnes Sorel. In all the battles the great companies were broken, and the towns were captured. The Scots themselves, for all their bravery, had just been dispersed at the battle of Verneuil: the sturdy Highlanders had comported themselves like heroes, but the chivalry of France and Scotland had left their spurs on the field of battle, and thus the King met with a new disaster, which can compare with those of Poitiers and Agincourt. The English crossed the Loire under the Duke of Bedford, Regent of the kingdom for Henry VI.<sup>1</sup> What was the real reason for this superiority of the English archers over the chivalry of France? This reason must have been one founded on general grounds, for it always produced the same results. In the first place, it would be an error to believe that the troops who were constantly victorious were all English.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> The English leaders were Warwick, Salisbury, and Talbot.

<sup>2</sup> The English troops were very highly paid, every man-at-arms receiving a shilling, every archer sixpence. (Rymer, vol. x., p. 392.)

fairest feathers in the Crown of England were at that time the fiefs of Guienne and the sub-fief of Gascony. Thus the English King had under his banner, Gascons, Normans, and Flemings, agile and robust men, whose lances were a very forest on the field of battle. A severe discipline bound them together. The soldiers of Gascony were good men at drawing the long and cross bows, and seldom missed their man. The English wore better forged armour, their iron and steel being of finer quality, and their cuirasses, arm-plates, and lambays were perfectly fitted to their limbs by reason of great exactness in the workmanship, which, while preserving the body of the wearer, left him freedom of movement. The Flemish towns furnished them with battle-axes, swords, extremely sharp lances, and cross-bows that shot so exactly as seldom to miss their mark ; these were so small that they could be protected from rain under a cloak. Their order of battle was closer and more regular. While the Gascon archers swept round the knights, the compact squares of lances<sup>1</sup> from Normandy, Northumberland, and Wales resisted the somewhat undisciplined charges of the French host, so that when once unhorsed the knights could only with great

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<sup>1</sup> Monstrolet discusses the causes of the English success at considerable length, p. 1, fol. 303.

difficulty remount their steeds, which were caparisoned, like their riders, in iron armour. They could be described as so many feudal castles—formidable when upright, ruins when overthrown. It was also evident that the English, being more advanced in the art of iron work and in the construction of artillery, maintained a superiority in the casting of pieces of ordnance, which were a recent invention, and which hurled large round stones to a great distance. These various advantages are sufficient to explain the almost constant triumphs of the English from the days of the Black Prince. Alas! the cause of Charles VII. seemed altogether desperate!

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VII.

**Legend of the Maid of Vaucouleurs.**

(1410-1429.)

In the midst of these undisciplined movements of the royal troops of Charles VII., and when it was even seriously proposed under his tent to withdraw within the Dauphiné, and no longer remain and defend a cause that seemed beyond hope—at this moment there suddenly spread a rumour that a young girl had just arrived at Chinon, asking an audience with Charles. She was said to have had divine revelations, and declared she was destined to make the English raise the siege of Orleans, and thereafter to con-

duct the noble King to the church of Saint Rémi at Rheims.<sup>1</sup>

In order to explain how this legend grew with such great rapidity and produced such a powerful effect, we must first examine of what elements the army of Charles VII. was composed. The knights-errant, captains of the Great Companies, had all quick and active imaginations, and were under the influence of the romances of chivalry and legendary ore. The Scots, on the other hand, were still more susceptible to romantic feelings, and peopled the mountains and lochs of Scotland with sylphs, with apparitions of women in white, who kept guard over the ancient castles. The legends of the Bretons, again, those other brave allies of Charles VII., told of the appearance of fairies and enchanters among their plains, woods, and rocks. There were Morgana the kind, Merlin, and old Druid or magician<sup>2</sup> of Scotland, whose prophecies

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<sup>1</sup> Joan reached Chinon on the 24th February, 1429. (Read the fine essays of M. de Laverdi on the story of the Maid.)

<sup>2</sup> Merlin was born in Caledonia or Scotland, in the fifth century: some attributed his prophecies to divine virtue, others to intercourse with the devil. For the rest, the part played by Merlin in the popular "Romances of the Round Table" is considerable; his prophecies have been translated into all languages. Bibliophiles value highly the rare French black letter edition in 3 vols. folio, Paris, 1498.

were everywhere well known, and in which was written, that "France would be delivered by a warlike virgin." It was not, therefore, astonishing that the sudden arrival of a young girl in armour at the camp of Charles VII., with a mission from Heaven, should exalt the enthusiasm of the captains and soldiers to the highest pitch. X  
On an old tapestry discovered at Lucerne, there are seen three or four heavily armed knights, who are received by Charles VII. on his throne, and among them we could not distinguish a female form but for a legend in German, which runs as follows—"How a young girl was sent from God to the Dauphin on earth."<sup>1</sup> Who, then, was this girl, whose name was already on every one's lips! She was called Jehanne (Joanne) a name distinctively belonging to Lorraine. Her birth-place was the village of Domremy (*domus Remensis*) between Neufchateau and Vaucouleurs. Her parents were worthy labourers, living by the work of their hands, and her father was called Jacques d'Arc (or the archer.) Heaven had granted him fine children, three boys and two girls. Lorraine was in the domain of René, King of Sicily, who had obtained it through his marriage

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<sup>1</sup>"Vie Kunt die Jock frow von got gesant dem Delfin in suit land." This very hideous tapestry has been bought by the Marguis d'Azeglio, minister of Sardinia in London.

with Isabeau, but such was the power of the Burgundians and the English at this time, that they were masters of a large part of the district, which was contested from hamlet to hamlet. Near Domremy was the village of Marié, which sided with the English, while Vaucouleurs took the part of René and of Charles VII., so that there had already been stone throwing and slinging between the inhabitants of the two villages.<sup>1</sup>

Lorraine, a country abounding in thick forests and Druidical rocks, was also a favourite abode of spirits. It had sacred springs and mysterious woods, and the inhabitants loved to hear long stories and fabulous histories. Heathenism had left lasting traces in Gaul. At Domremy for example, there was still standing the fairy or nymph tree, which the young boys and girls covered with flowers, during the festivities of the month of May.<sup>2</sup> Christianity had placed the image of the Holy Virgin under the cool shades, and she went under the name of Notre Dame of Domrémy. To her, Joan had vowed a deep devotion, as well as to her two patrons, Saints

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<sup>1</sup> The most curious study on the Maid of Orleans, is that contained in the third volume of *Notices et extraits des MSS. de la Bibliothèque du Roi*.

<sup>2</sup> The Maypole had its origin in the Roman festival of Flora, where the youths danced in a circle, adorned with garlands, &c.

Catherine and Marguerite. According to the custom of the proud race of the Lorraine women, Joan rode a large bony horse of the district. Some more simple chronicles say merely that she knew only how to spin thread and weave the web, with the intention doubtless of adding to the marvellous nature of her mission.

Throughout Lorraine, nothing was spoken of but the siege of Orleans by the English, under their famous chiefs, Salisbury, Suffolk, and Talbot.<sup>1</sup> It was well known that the destiny of Charles was at stake at Orleans; if this large fortified city were once taken, the English could spread beyond the Loire. Tours, Chinon and even Bourges could not withstand them, and the cause of the lilies of France was lost. Consequently the last remnants of the chivalry of the country were grouped round Orleans, William d'Albret, Jacques de Carbannes, Lahire, Xaintrailles, Dunois and the Scottish Guards, under their proud mountain chieftains, Stewart and Douglas. All would know how to die in support of the heroism of the citizens of Orleans, who defended their city with the energy of despair.

Captain Baudricourt commanded for the

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<sup>1</sup> Consult for the siege of Orleans, the Chronicle of Monstrelet, and compare it with Chartier and Holinshed. There exists also a *Journal du siège d'Orléans*, and a *Chronique de la Pucelle*.

Duchess of Bar, (the Queen's sister) that part of Lorraine which remained loyal to its Dukes. The young girl Joan presented herself before this brave chief, to ask permission to go to the town of Chinon, because the Holy Virgin, Saint Catherine and Saint Marguerite had revealed to her that she was destined to deliver Orleans, and to conduct the King under his own banner to the cathedral of Rheims, to be crowned King of France. The chronicle of the Maid tells us of the apparitions and the miracle which confirmed Joan of Arc's mission; the Church has not admitted this as a particular case of sanctity, and the absence of such authentication cannot be supplied by miracles. There is in all this wonderful case a mixture of Merlin's prophecies, and of miracles from heaven which would lead us to believe that the chronicle of the Maid was added to like the legends of the Wandering Jew, or of Geneviève de Brabant, which were sung in the war tents and castles of the middle ages. The only thing that a sober historian can admit is, that at any cost the courage of the men-at-arms had to be roused, and that the appearance of a young girl on horse-back, like a messenger from heaven, at the head of the companies of warriors, preceded by a religious banner, and herself endowed with a character of sanctity, was calculated to revive the energy of mercenaries, create

hopes, and increase their heroism. It would be impossible to deny the wonderful deeds of the Maid, and the new spirit of discipline with which she inspired the army of Charles VII.; but the real glory<sup>1</sup> of the defence of Orleans belongs to the burgesses of the city, who defended themselves with an energy inspired by their hatred of England. Joan of Arc was but the standard that directed the great actions of chivalry: she transformed the war into a crusade; she imparted a peculiar sanctity to their courage. Her prediction to the Lord of Baudricourt was accomplished; the siege of Orleans was raised by the English; she brought the King to Rheims, where he was crowned, almost without pomp, and without a nobility. Joan failed before Paris, where she fought with the utmost bravery from the summit of the Butte des Moulins. Wounded and surrounded by the press of men-at-arms, she fell into the power of the English at Compiègne.<sup>2</sup> Thus ended her mission and her influence over the cause and events of Charles's reign. In the short period of eight months all the glorious episodes of

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<sup>1</sup> There has been found in the Maison de Ville at Orleans a vellum manuscript, with the title, "Discours au vrai du siège qui fut mis devant Orleans," and it is the most curious work on this siege.

<sup>2</sup> In the month of January, 1430: Joan of Arc had fought like a hero.

the life of Joan of Arc took place. With the exception of the raising of the siege of Orleans, there was no decisive contest which could decide the supremacy of Charles VII., and the English remained masters of the fields of battle. The legend of Joan of Arc was a passing gleam of light cast on the history of France. This episode produced a peculiar effect of fear on the English. What the French camp attributed to an inspiration or providential sanctity, the English had found a cause for in sorcery. England was the country of gloomy witches and incantations. The transient success of the chivalry of Charles VII. under the standard of the Maid had deeply embittered the mercenaries and Welsh archers,<sup>2</sup> as well as the Norman and Saxon knights. Joan was not regarded as an ordinary prisoner whom the fortune of war had allowed to fall into their hands, but as an armed sorceress, who had frequently been without mercy for the English archers who fell into her hands. Accordingly, a general cry of execration against the Maid of Orleans arose in the English army as an expression of savage hatred; her trial had to be arranged so as to satisfy the clamours of the camp, "We must have the sorceress." The records of this trial

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<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Bedford had a *Te Deum* sung for the capture of the Maid. (Monstrelet, vol. 8.)

still exist ; the patient and scholarly erudition of historians has examined the nature of the proceedings. It has been presented, so to speak, as a work of the Inquisition, and an eternal reproach to the Church, and we find a perfect show of cardinals, bishops, and monks in the pictures and engravings of modern schools. It is time, however, to give this trial its true character—namely, that of vengeance on the part of the English soldiery, when the Count of Vaudemont had delivered the Maid into the hands of the Duke of Bedford.

Let us follow, then, one by one, all the steps of this trial. The first demand that Joan should be prosecuted came from the University of Paris. (The Inquisition did not exist in France.<sup>1</sup>) This demand was addressed to the Duke of Burgundy, in order that Joan might be handed over to the English. After she was taken to Rouen and imprisoned, by the commands of the Earl of Warwick, a Commission of sixty Anglo-Norman assessors (a kind of jury) was named, under the presidency of Jean Conchon, the former Maitre de Requêtes to the Parliament of Paris, and

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Louis had been unwilling to admit the Inquisition or the presence of a *grand-inquisiteur*. Before him Philippe Auguste had rejected this institution, except for the repression of the Albigenses.

whom the Duke of Bedford had raised to the Bishopric of Beauvais.

Besides this Commission there was nominated an *enquêteur* or public prosecutor, and it is this name of *enquêteur* which has led people to believe that the Inquisition intervened. The Inquisition had other forms of procedure; it had no assessors nor council, but pronounced irrevocable and secret judgment in cases of heresy, though, of course, it handed the accused over for execution to the secular authorities.<sup>1</sup> Joan underwent six public examinations. First of all, enquiries were made in Lorraine; all were favourable enough to the accused, only it was established that she was accustomed to wear men's dress, and to speak of her heavenly visions. On several occasions the assessors counselled Joan to cease from wearing such garments as they were not those of her sex, and to give up believing herself inspired. Joan, however, persisted in both these courses.

The judgment pronounced by the assessors against Joan of Arc is still extant.<sup>2</sup> The Bishop of Beauvais, who was president, declared that

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<sup>1</sup> The records of the trial of the Maid have been collected, and can be seen in the National Library.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from the trial of Joan of Arc. (National Library.)

"seeing that Joan persisted in her sin, she should be confined, and kept on bread and water." There was no sentence of death. As soon as this sentence was known, a cry of indignation arose in the English army. The Earl of Warwick, full of anger, exclaimed, "The business is botched, for Joan has escaped us." The assessors declared "they could do nothing." The Earl of Warwick insisted that henceforth the trial should be conducted by the secular authority. The English soldiers demanded her death. Joan of Arc exclaimed, "If, as I asked, I had been kept by the functionaries of the Church, and not by my enemies, my lot would not have been such a cruel one."<sup>1</sup> The Bishop of Beauvais, who is represented as extremely harsh, said to Joan, "Go in peace, the Church can no longer defend you, and abandons you to secular power." This secular power, which meant but the will of the soldiery, handed Joan of Arc over to punishment. The veterans and English archers, impatient of delay, exclaimed, "Well then, priests, get you gone quickly; do you want us to miss our dinner to day? Leave her to us at once, and it will soon be all over." This hatred followed Joan even to her place of execution. The English veterans

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<sup>1</sup> These words are curious when found coming from Joan of Arc.

assisted at this with a grim smile of pleasure; every one there was connected with the camp; if there were any priests round the stake, it is because condemned persons according to the general formulas of the Church, were to be assisted during their last moments; the priest who lifted the cross to her lips, that she might kiss the Christ, did not do so in derision, but as a duty, in order to assist this soul in pain. If there was a regular pyre made, it was because the English treated Joan as a sorceress. It was always in this solemn and almost infernal way that the English interpreted miracles, an example of which we have in the legend of Macbeth, which Shakespeare, a century later, illuminated with his genius.<sup>2</sup> In this fatal and solemn persecution, the English leaders displayed an obstinacy which was a result not only of their vindictive character, but also of their military situation. The spirit of the soldiers required awakening, for it had been greatly depressed by Joan of Arc's success. The belief had to be established that her temporary victories had a magical cause which must necessarily disappear as soon as the ashes of the sorceress were scattered to the wind. Armies are like crowds, impression-

<sup>2</sup> These facts are all drawn from the trial of Joan, compared with Monstrelet, book iii., cap. 11, and Holinshed's chronicle. The records of the trial fill thirty MS. vols. in the National Library.

able to the last degree, and any unexpected occurrence rouses or discourages them. If the English had believed in Joan's miracles, they would have seen in them the hand of heaven, and their hearts would have been cowed. The spell cast by the sorceress they thought was bound to cease having its effect on the army from the day she ascended the funeral-pyre.

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VIII.

**Acts of the English Government at  
Paris. Accession of Henry VI.**

(1424-1430.)

The tendency of the populace, after great civil troubles, is to accept any government that offers it protection or flatters its pride, especially when it is deeply compromised in regard to the power which has been overthrown. Its main fear, as I have said, is that of seeing the old power reinstated, with the prospect of reprisals on its former opponents, and to escape this, the rabble will acclaim anything, even violence itself. In this we find the explanation of the strength, duration, and even the undoubted popularity of Henry the Sixth's regency at Paris. Henry was, besides, supported by the Burgundian faction, which included the inhabitants of the halles and the guilds; and he had on his side Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, one of the favourite personages of Paris.

Though now of an advanced age, the Queen kept up all her old tastes for pleasures, pomp, and festivities. In her mansion in the Rue Barbette, there were plays, ballets, masquerades, and even Courts of Love, to sit in judgment on faithless knights, who craved mercy from their mistresses.

The King of England had entrusted his supreme authority, both in Paris and over the whole of France, to his brother, the Duke of Bedford, one of the leading statesmen of the day, and a great popular favorite. Commerce, invigorated by the close union with England, was prosperous; the citizens' shops were ever full of strangers. A favorite of the the Church, the Duke of Bedford had begun, in the centre of the public markets, the magnificent basilisk of St. Eustache, on the lines laid down by the canons of Anglo-Norman architecture. One of his followers, the Earl of Winchester, fortified a castle between the Bièvre and the Marne, which took his name, since corrupted into Bicêtre. To facilitate the unloading of merchandise, the duke of Bedford built a quay, long known as the *Port aux Anglais*. Everything was flourishing in Paris; obedience therefore was universal. Parliament, clergy, citizens, all were devoted to the Regent.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Plantagenet, Duke of Bedford, was the third son of Henry IV. of England.

The accession of Henry VI. as King of France took place at the death of the poor imbecile King, Charles VI., and every constitutional and legal formality was observed in this transmission of the Crown. We read in the registers of the Parliament of Paris, "On this Thursday, the 19th day of November 1422, there came together, and were assembled in the House of Parliament, the president, counsellors, and Bishop of Paris, the chiefs and deputies of the chapters, monasteries and colleges, the provosts of Paris, and of the merchants, the magistrates, lawyers, and procurators of the Chatelet, as well as many burgesses, villains, and inhabitants of the city of Paris. To these came the duke of Bedford, brother of the Regent, and who has since died, and the said Duke of Bedford sat alone at the head of the said court of Parliament, and he declared to them that from the marriage of the said late King of England with a daughter of France, had been born a goodly son, called Henry,<sup>1</sup> King of France and England according to the said treaty of Troyes, who should be proclaimed King of France and England, and that the said Duke of Bedford was minded to employ his body, soul and chivalry for

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<sup>1</sup> Henry was at this time only nine months old. The Duke of Gloucester held the Regency in the absence of the Duke of Bedford, who was then in France. (Parliamentary Rolls iv. 170.)

his nephew, for the good of this kingdom, and to maintain the subjects thereof in good faith and peace. And that the said Regent was minded to have the Duchy of Normandy restored to the Crown of France . . . . And then he caused the aforesaid assembly to come and swear in his hands, and in the hands of the Chancellor, who held a missal, and they caused each one to swear that they would keep the said Treaty of peace, under obedience to the said Henry, King of France and England, and of the said Regent, and the chancellor charged the chief magistrate and the deputies to cause the inhabitants of the town to take the oath at the town hall, district by district."<sup>1</sup>

All the legal formalities were carefully observed, and nothing was wanting to the acknowledgment of Henry VI., as King of France and England. The populace desired the presence of the young King Henry at Paris; the nature of this desire on their part can be seen in the petitions of the Parisians, who were anxious to see the young King of England and France take possession of his kingdom and his good city of Paris; it was discussed at every meeting at the Town Hall. It was with disappointment that they learned the

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<sup>1</sup> This strange and curious act is preserved in the Parliamentary registers, 19. November 1422. It is given with corresponding accuracy in the *Memoires des Paris* p. 710.

obstacles the English parliament placed in the way of the King's making this journey. The Lords and Commons had a feeling that if their King were to be established in Paris, there would be perforce a modification in his title and prerogative, and that the three *fleurs de lys* would appear in chief, while the leopard of England would be merely quartered on the national arms.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the Commons refused the subsidies for defraying the expense of the King's journey, which would necessarily be great, considering that it involved his entering into possession of a whole realm.

The Parisians therefore sighed and longed after their young King, although the regency of the Duke of Bedford was carried on with solicitude and intelligence. A laborious man himself, the Regent granted the artisans and guilds considerable privileges and a new organisation. In the archives of France are found several ordinances of the Duke of Bedford, regent of the kingdom, which have been kept like those of the King. One confirms all the magistrates, officers and notaries in their functions, without any change or alteration.<sup>2</sup> Another divides Paris into districts, each with its own magistrate. On the request of

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<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parlem. iv. 175.

<sup>2</sup> 5 December 1422.

the burgesses, he freed every house that was in ruins from loans and mortgages. The Regent also modified the system of annuities and of succession. The jurisdiction of the Châtelet was regulated by a special ordinance. In each of these acts the Regent, in the name of Henry VI., speaks of "his fair kingdom of France and his good city of Paris." The formula used by the Regent is this—"By the King, on the motion of his Council, convened by the order of the Duke of Bedford, Regent of the kingdom." The systematic character of the English constitution is revealed in these acts, and the Parliament acted spontaneously and on its own account, provided it secured the approbation and sanction of the King. The reign of Henry VI. would have seen the Paris Parliament constituted in the same forms, and with the method of government by Lords and Commons, as in England. "On this day, the 7th of February, 1424, at eight o'clock, there left the Parliament Chamber the Presidents, MM. Morvilliers and Longueil, and several Counsellors, to journey to the Regent, the Duke of Bedford, at Tournelles, to elect a Chancellor in place of Master Jehan Leclerc, who had on the previous day given up his seat, and had been excused and deposed from the office and exercise of Chancellorship, to which office was then elected, as was desired, M. de Luxembourg, Bishop of

Therouane, who was received that day into office, and took the accustomed oath in the hands of the said Bedford, Regent of this kingdom." (Register of Parliament, folio 1424.) Some time afterwards the desire of the burgesses of Paris was granted: their dear little King, Henry VI., received authority from Parliament to make a journey to France, and a subsidy was voted in order to put him in a position to hold his State with plentiful generosity during his journey. Henry VI. set out and landed at Havre, whence he passed to Rouen, an essentially Norman town, and consequently always somewhat English. The young King was received with enthusiasm; most of the barons and knights wore on their breast the Norman coat of arms. On his arrival at Pontoise the King gave an audience to the Parliament of Paris, the provost of the merchants, and the guilds, who came with banners flying to congratulate him.<sup>1</sup> The moment he made his appearance at the gates of the capital all the bells were set pealing; at every street corner triumphal arches of fruits and flowers spanned the streets; then there were scaffolding where mysteries and rhapsodies were enacted: angels descended from the blue sky as if they came from paradise to crown the young King, who seemed to share in the

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<sup>1</sup> 14th December, 1431.

public joy.<sup>1</sup> Paris kept high holiday for eight days, in the midst of the feasting and rejoicing of the inhabitants. Oceans of cider, ale, and wine of Argenteuil were drunk. When the young King was seen to raise his cap to salute his grandmother Isabeau, seated at a balcony at the *Hôtel de Saint Paul*, the house destined for the abode of her little grandson, applause seemed inadequate to satisfy the eager joy of the people. Persevering historical research has enabled me to discover an act emanating from the Court of the young Henry VI., and sealed at Paris. It is thus worded—"Henry, by the grace of God King of France and England, . . . . given under our seal of the Châtelet (Supreme Court) of Paris, in the absence of our own, and of our reign the first year." The Parliamentary seal (the great seal) represented the young King seated on a chair holding two sceptres, one in each hand—in the right the shield of France, on the left that of England, the *fleurs de lys* and the leopard being quartered thereon.<sup>2</sup>

The chronicles of this time, written after the

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<sup>1</sup> The procession passed the Rue Saint Denis, before the Châtelet, the Sainte Chapelle, the Rue de la Calandre, the Vieille Juiverie, the pont Notre Dame, and the faubourg Saint Antoine, on its way to the Hôtel Saint Paul. (*Journal de Paris*, 1431.)

<sup>2</sup> Biblioth. Nationale (collection of engravings.)

restoration of Charles VII., mention but a few names of French barons or knights, as taking part in the royal procession of Henry VI., with those of the cardinals of Winchester and York, the Duke of Bedford, and the Earls of Warwick and Suffolk. But these very chronicles declare that the numerous and magnificent procession extended from the Rues Saint Antoine and Saint Paul, to the Bastille, in the midst of cries of *noël! Noël!* The young King with his charming face, graciously bowed to the multitude that cheered him. From the Hôtel Saint Paul, he went to reside at the Hôtel des Tournelles, which had been thoroughly repaired by the Duke of Bedford. The richness displayed in its apartments, and the various styles of buildings, rendered it almost unrecognisable. The Duke of Bedford had a great taste for Anglo-Norman architecture.

King Henry VI., by the advice of his barons, resolved to be consecrated and crowned at Notre-Dame, in Paris, that cathedral church so loved and respected by the Parisians. The ceremony was splendid, the streets were richly decked, and the acclamations unanimous. The King went to the marble table of the parliament to dine. Contrary to custom, which only admitted nobles, magistrates, and rich burgesses round this festal board, Henry wished the doors to be opened to all the people, and the result was that the

palace was invaded by the crowds from the halles and workshops.<sup>1</sup> The highest lords and magistrates found themselves elbowed by butchers, tanners, makers of hats, and even cobblers, and this greatly disgusted them. But Henry VI. aimed above all at popularity with the multitude. The festivities at Paris during the King's short visit were re-doubled; fireworks were displayed at the Chatelet, and, following the English fashion, distributions were made of underdone meat, that found little favour with the public palate. In the midst of these rejoicings and feastings, the somewhat sombre spirit of the Saxon race was seen bursting forth. Comedy actors gave representations of the Dance of Death, in which death spared no condition. With a violin in his hand, and a flute in his mouth, he danced with the Pope, Emperors, Kings, Cardinals, members of Parliament, rich burgesses, harlots, grinning with them all in a very amiable manner. The Dance of Death took place on the graveyard *des Innocents*, near the site of the church of Saint Eustache.<sup>2</sup> Before leaving

<sup>1</sup> The following words, flattering for the Parisians, are found in the preamble of an ordinance of the king, "We wish to treat and honour our good city of Paris, like Alexander treated the noble town of Corinth, where he made his chief stay, or as the Roman Emperors treated the city of Rome." (*Recueil du Louvre*, 1432.)

<sup>2</sup> The manuscripts of the National Library contain

Paris, and after the feasts and rejoicings, King Henry, who was recalled by the English Parliament, caused a new ordinance to be proclaimed, addressed to his subjects in France, to thank them for their kind reception of himself, and at the same time to confirm all the privileges of Parliament, of the jurisdiction of the Châtelet, of provosts, of the magistracy, and of citizenship.

The system of the guilds was essentially English. If the power of Henry VI. had been consolidated, a system of liberty would have resulted, very similar to the Great Charter of England.\*

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IX.

**Influence of Agnes Sorel over Charles  
VII. Alliance with the Great  
Feudatories.**

(1435-1438.)

The beautiful legend of Joan the Maid had but a limited effect, and an incomplete conclusion. If she inflamed some imaginations among the soldiers, such as Dunois, Xaintrailles, and Lahire, this transient excitement had not spread. The soldiers of Charles VII. had been forced to raise the siege

minatures which represent with great accuracy the Dance of Death long before the paintings of Holbein. I consider these minatures as anterior to the Dance of Death of Bale, which is ascribed to the year 1543. One dated 1383 has been discovered at Menden.

\* Recueil du Louvre, December, 1432.

of Paris in all haste, and to withdraw between Orleans and Bourges. The name of Joan had found but a fatal renown on the occasion of the cruel trial at Rouen; her very condemnation had not been an unpopular act at Paris. Was it not the University of the glorious city that had begun the proceedings against Joan? All that we find connected with the story and defence of Joan of Arc, belongs to the period of quietude and repose which followed the restoration of Charles VII. It was then that the King granted to her family,<sup>1</sup> letters patent of nobility, the verdict given against her at the trial was reversed, and her features were reproduced on canvas,<sup>2</sup> and songs were sung about her miracles.

Tout au beau milieu d'Orleans  
On voit une pucelle.  
Qu'on propose dans tous les temps  
Comme parfait modèle.  
Elle fut dit-on, d'un très-bon renom,  
Et naquit en Lorraine.  
Jeanne on l'appela  
Tout comme sa maraine.

<sup>1</sup> 16th January, 1430.

<sup>2</sup> We have only comparatively modern portraits of Joan of Arc; the monument which stood on the bridge of Orleans was certainly not older than 1572; the picture in the Hotel de Ville belonged also to the 16th century. The piece of tapestry engraved by Ponsard bears no guarantee of authenticity: a copy is in the National Library.

As the national antipathies during the protracted English wars were embittered, the image of Joan the Maid was chosen as a standard; her trial was the symbol of the rivalry between the two nations, and one of the grievances imputed to England. But at the same time, in going over the misfortunes of the Roitelet de Bourges, it is certain that the intervention of the Maid must be considered to have had little effect on the war.

The true awakening of Chivalry belongs to Agnes Sorel, and the best testimony is found in the following verses of Francis First, so often quoted :

Gentille Agnès, plus d'honneur tu mérites  
La cause étant de France recouvrer  
Que ce que peut dedans un cloître ouvrir  
Close nonain ou bien dévot hermite.

This salutary and glorious influence of Agnes Sorel on the awakening of chivalry is attested by the contemporary chronicles, and a century later Brantôme told how a wizard announced before the court of Bourges to the Lady of Fromenteau (Agnes Sorel) that she would be loved by a great King. Gentle Agnes saluting Charles VII. with profound reverence said, that "she asked permission to withdraw to the Court of England, for it was that King whom this prediction referred to, since the King of France was going to lose his Crown, and the King of England to place it on his head."

The King was so struck by these words that he began to weep, and then taking courage, and quitting his hunting and his gardens, he acted so as to drive the English from his kingdom by his bravery and courage.<sup>1</sup> Such is the tradition which has been preserved through the ages, of the noble influence of Agnes Sorel.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, if there was at this epoch a great awakening of chivalry, it was not the only element in this movement of liberation. The triumph of Charles VII., and his restoration to the throne belong to general causes which must be followed and studied. The influence of Agnes Sorel has a close connection with the union between Charles VII. and his vassals, and especially with the Duke of Burgundy.

This negotiation was undertaken by the Duchess of Lorraine and Bar, Queen of Sicily, and a Princess of great intelligence and energy, who exercised considerable influence on the great vassals in Anjou, Brittany, and even Burgundy. Agnes Sorel, her maid of honour,

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<sup>1</sup> Brantôme, Charles VII.

<sup>2</sup> "And certainly she was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, and by this beauty she had a great influence on the realm of France. She brought to the King young men-at-arms and noble comrades, by whom the King was well served." (Chron. d'Olivier de la Marche.) Olivier de la Marche lived at the court of Burgundy about the year 1444.

was her devoted go-between in this business, and, so to speak, the guarantee given to the King. The first condition of every agreement was that the King should dismiss from him all the leaders of the Great Companies—that council of adventurers who had been able to serve his cause in the days of difficulty and despair when he was the Roitelet de Bourges, but who were now nothing but an element of turbulence and disorder when the King of France was about to become the constitutional suzerain of the great vassals of the monarchy.<sup>1</sup> The most compromised individual of all these was Tanneguy Duchâtel, a faithful adherent of the Dauphin during the troubles between the Armagnacs and Burgundians,<sup>2</sup> but who was a man of the past, and consequently a difficulty for the future. Tanneguy, besides, was an obstacle to any kind of reconciliation with the Duke of Burgundy; he was loudly accused of having assassinated Duke John on the bridge of Montereau, and how could the King hope for peace with the Burgundian faction if Tanneguy Duchâtel remained his friend and chief counsellor?

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminaries of the negotiation of Arras. (In Monstrelet, 1430.)

<sup>2</sup> It was Tanneguy Duchâtel who had rescued the Dauphin from the midst of the Burgundians at the time of the insurrection at Paris.

Dunois the bastard was in a similar position ; his career ended with the glorious adventures of Joan of Arc, whose arm he had seconded and whose legend he had propagated. A new leaf had to be turned over. If Lahire and Xaintrailles remained still at the head of the armed troops, it was because they were soldiers pure and simple, and did not take part in affairs of State. The new Council of State was to negotiate with the vassals of Brittany, and to bring them to an intimate alliance with the King ; Agnes Sorel was to gradually efface from the Duke of Burgundy's heart the terrible memory of the deed on the bridge of Montereau—a stupendous task, which the great negotiatrice of this time, the Duchess of Lorraine and Queen of Sicily, set herself. To arrive at this result they had to disentangle the King from all responsibility, by falsely suggesting that the Dauphin had had no hand in the assassination of Duke John, and that the evil counsellors were alone responsible.

The Duke of Burgundy had reason at this time to complain of the English, because in his view they had not kept the engagements entered into in former treaties. The moment was favourable for attempting direct negotiations,<sup>1</sup> and a reconcilia-

<sup>1</sup> The fathers of the Council of Bale had written a touching letter, inviting the Christian Prince to return to peace. (March 1435.)

tion with the King. With the absorbing personality of the Anglo-Saxon race, with whom it was difficult to remain for long on terms of alliance, the English wished everything to be as they wanted; they hoped to impose their laws, and their often eccentric customs on the people; the Duke of Burgundy were too proud to suffer this long. Again, it was not merely as a great vassal of the crown that the Duke of Burgundy could lend his aid to the restoration of Charles VII.; it involved likewise the popular feeling of Paris, which was of considerable weight, as well as that of the halles and the guilds. Under the standard of Burgundy the revolt had begun. This standard alone could cause it to cease. The English at Paris could themselves recognise this, as they saw their influence in the city decrease in proportion as they separated from the policy of the House of Burgundy. There are certain ideas, certain emotions, even certain proper names, which are everything with the people. When it was no longer debated in Paris how success to the Burgundian cause might be secured, but, how that of the English might be promoted, all their affections and memories turned at once towards Charles, provided his restoration should be effected by the Duke of Burgundy.<sup>1</sup> With this in view we can

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<sup>1</sup> Consult Monstrelet for an account of the joyful reception of the Duchess of Burgundy, at Paris.

understand the subjects discussed by Charles' council, at Bourges, as well as the new policy inaugurated by the influence of Agnes Sorel. We must give full credit, doubtless, to the power of love, and to the blind infatuation it can inspire, but a continued favour, such as that shown to Agnes Sorel, has frequently a general cause, and we must find it in the great friendship felt for her by the Queen of Sicily, the Duchess of Lorraine, the Princess, who<sup>1</sup> had snatched the Roitelet de Bourges from the influence of the chiefs of the great companies, (Duchâtel and Dunois) in order to re-establish round him the feudal alliance of Brittany, Anjou, and Burgundy. Agnes Sorel's was the sweet countenance in which the new position of parties found an expression.

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X.

**Jacques Cœur, the King's Silversmith.  
His Alliance with Agnes Sorel.**

(1435-1440.)

Charles VII., on releasing himself from the yoke ✓ of the adventurers who formed his council, and being joined by the great feudatories, found the

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<sup>1</sup> The Duchess of Burgundy, sister of the Duke of Burgundy, acted also as a mediator in the peace of 1435.

wretchedness and misery of the Chateau de Chinon considerably abated. The King was no longer compelled to offer his comrades in arms a fowl or mutton bone only. There was now at the Court of Bourges a certain magnificence round the King, the Queen of Sicily, the Duke of Bourbon, the Duke de Richemont and Agnes Sorel. The consequence was that financial arrangements had to be come to: what hand could fill the royal treasury? From this point begins the influence of Jacques Cœur.

In the Middle Ages, the Jews were the only persons who lent money at exorbitant interest. The moment they found a victim in their power they pounced on him with the avidity of vultures. Submissive and servile as they were, they stooped even to kiss the dust of the ground, if by such means they could gnaw the flesh and suck the blood of a poor labourer, as well as of a lord or knight.<sup>1</sup> At every period of commercial crisis the Jew, resorted to as a last resource, granted a sum of money on loan, and by this means society was handed over to him to be tortured at his will. Like Shylock the Jew in Shakespeare, he tore the people's flesh into pieces, until the people, rousing themselves, chased him from them like an unclean

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<sup>1</sup> Consult the ordinances of Philippe Auguste, 1190.

beast.<sup>1</sup> When once the Jews were exiled, however, as financial needs had still to be considered, the Lombards replaced them, less in the way of usury than in general commerce. At this time the name Lombard was given to all who came from beyond the mountains, such as the Venetians, Genoese, Pisanese, and Florentines—those daring merchants who, since the crusades, sailed abroad to bring home the spices of Egypt, the cloths of Constantinople, and the fabrics of Syria. A few French merchants had in the fourteenth century established a trade with the East by way of Marseilles.<sup>2</sup> Several had become goldsmiths and silversmiths—that is, workers as well as dealers in silver. The silversmith was an indispensable personage to kings and great vassals: he made advances, and in exchange was allowed imposts, customs, and revenues on better conditions than the Jews or Lombards. To this class belonged the rich merchant and silversmith, Jacques Cœur, under Charles VII. On entering Bourges, one still finds quite close to the cathedral, and in a perfect state of preservation, a large house built in a style between the Venetian and Flemish,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Capéfigue is known for his unreasoning hatred of the Jews.

<sup>2</sup> The statutes of Marseilles (13th century) give evidence of the great trade carried on with the East.

after the manner of the hôtels-de-ville of Bourges, Antwerp, and Brussels. This is the famous house of Jacques Cœur, silversmith to Charles VII. There is no doubt existing regarding the French origin of Jacques-Cœur,<sup>1</sup> who was the son of a goldsmith of Bourges itself. At this time the trade of goldsmith was not merely a craft, but an art: the goldsmith was not a simple worker (smith); he had to do also with the minting of money, the care of the coinage, and the testing and purification of metals. As gold, in short, was always an object of strong desire and the first want of men, States, and Princes, the royal goldsmith became a man of importance from the time of Saint Eloi.<sup>2</sup> One of the malpractices of the time was the adulteration of the coinage, and the goldsmith rendered important services in these coining operations. Several of these goldsmiths were alchemists. There was no savant of the Middle Ages who during his long course of studies had not sought for the art of making gold, and as examples we have the great and subtle Albert, Raymond Lulli, etc. How many Frankish and German alchemists had spent their lives in the search for gold!

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<sup>1</sup> See my work on *Financiers*, vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> The life of Saint Eloi in the *Acta Sanctorum* and in the *Bollandists*, contains a curious account of the coinage of the Middle Ages.

Jacques Cœur, when quite a young man, had been employed in the mint at Bourges; the Roman art had bequeathed to the Middle Ages a certain knowledge of stamping coins and medals; the gold and silver pieces of his age have come down to us in a good state of preservation. Jacques Cœur, who by his knowledge of gold had increased his trade till it extended, like that of the Venetians and Genoese, to every kind of merchandise, shewed a spirit of great intelligence and dauntless enterprise in buying up coin from every quarter.<sup>1</sup> He did this at Constantinople and Venice, where gold was especially unalloyed. Then he coined these pieces which he had bought into new ones of less intrinsic value. All that we have, however, of the coinage of Charles VII, whether gold pieces, silver coins, or simple *deniers*, are of great purity. Jacques Cœur's wealth resulted from the sale of merchandise at the fairs of Paris, Lyons, Bourges, Toulouse, and Albi. As soon as the royal power was strengthened by its alliance with the house of Anjou-Lorraine, Jacques Cœur, who was at first appointed keeper of the mines, and overseer of the coinage, received the official title of royal silver-smith and keeper

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<sup>1</sup> Le Blanc's splendid treatise on the *Monnaies* is a summary of the science of numismatics during the 12th and 13th centuries.

of the treasury, and was charged with the superintendence of the imposts and revenues of the realm. Under the protection of the Queen of Sicily, the friend and devoted mistress of Agnes Sorel, he procured by his credit considerable resources for the royal cause, by negotiating loans at Genoa, Milan and Venice with the Lombard merchants, to whom he gave his private fortune and credit as security. With a view to please the companies of men-at-arms, Jacques Cœur had a law passed, regarding the divisions into which the "marc" of gold was to be divided, and which had until now been an accidental and arbitrary impost. The officers were paid like the troops themselves, and the masters of the court of accounts were to receive counters of gold and silver<sup>1</sup> as payment. A goldsmith as well as royal treasurer, Jacques Cœur was the first to cut the diamond, which till then was unwrought and unpolished, as can be seen on the coverings of missals, and even in the reliquaries of the saints. Jacques Cœur also brought workmen from Venice and Constantinople to cut diamonds, and give them as well as other precious stones, that brilliance which constitutes the beauty of modern ornaments, the green of the emerald, the blue of the sapphire, the sparkling

<sup>1</sup> Counters were used in the middle ages for purposes of calculation. See *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* under "Jeton."

fire and blaze of the diamond. The first ornament consisting of diamonds was worn by Agnes Sorel, if we can believe the chronicles. Jacques Cœur made her a present of a clasp for her waist, and in her portrait she is represented with it on. This ornament consisting of pearls and diamonds,<sup>1</sup> fastens over her breast.

Agnes Sorel and Isabeau of Bavaria were the first to make use of woven cloth for chemises, which had up till then been wove of fine wool, a product of Brussels and the Flemish towns. The Queen of Naples wore lace and chemises of fine linen; since then the King's daughters according to the learned Benedictines, each received two of them in their marriage dowry, independently of two hundred thousand pieces of gold without counting landed property.<sup>2</sup> The richness of the costumes consisted especially in the gold brocades, made at Venice and Constantinople. The head dresses were like tall mitres, from which hung long veils, the origin of which could evidently be traced to the east. In the miniatures of the manuscripts, the noble ladies are represented thus decked out, riding to festivals on fine horses. These head-dresses became their fair and delicate features

<sup>1</sup> Collection of portraits and engravings. (Biblioth. Nat.)

<sup>2</sup> Benedictines. *L'Art de vérifier les dates*, Reign of Charles VII.

remarkably well, and the white veil draped their figure, clothed in tight fitting gold brocade.<sup>1</sup> Shoes curved at the toes were worn with long points, and were ornamented with precious stones, as we see them later on the feet of the courtesans of Venice. All this luxury came from the East. Jacques Cœur's trade was connected with this extravagance in dress. The fortune of Jacques Cœur, who was the friend and protégé of Agnes Sorel, seemed already an insult to the people's misery. The phrase "rich as Jacques Cœur" became common. Churchmen in the pulpit accused him of trading with infidels without scruple, and of having dealings with Turks and Persians. Master of much money, Jacques Cœur acquired great domains, more extensive than those of the great vassals. He had just bought the lands of Saint Fargeau,<sup>2</sup> with the twenty-seven parishes which were at that time dependent on it, and the right of high and low justice. Protected and encouraged by Agnes Sorel, Jacques Cœur furnished the King with all the necessary money to allow him to prosecute the war with England,

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<sup>1</sup> Monstrelet's manuscript (Collect. Gagnière) contains a marvellous collection of miniatures (Biblioth. nat). See also Lacroix's *Costumes au moyen-âge*.

<sup>2</sup> This fine estate passed to the family of Lepelletier. It was held by the wretched regicide Lepelletier de Saint Fargeau, a man too rich to be a true democrat.

and the restoration of his party, with perseverance and courage, Silversmiths have more than once served a national cause!

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XI.

**Decline of the English Power in France.**

(1430-1435.)

Henry VI.'s stay at Paris had been of too short duration to leave a deep impression. After the coronation at Notre Dame, the child King, recalled by the English Parliament, had left the Tournelles Palace and gone to Rouen, the favourite city of the Anglo-Norman race.<sup>1</sup> The Parisians were all irritated at seeing the little value the new King seemed to place on his good city of Paris. Was it henceforth to rank as a secondary city, after London, and even after Rouen? These questions as to the supremacy of cities one over the other had a powerful effect on the proud feelings of the masses. Yet King Henry VI. had left as his representative at Paris his uncle, the Duke of Bedford, an essentially wise and sympathetic nobleman, and one who could have governed the Parisians extremely well, had the English Parliament not refused the subsidies

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<sup>1</sup> Henry VI.'s stay at Paris did not extend beyond a month. ("Journal de Paris," April, 1432.)

necessary to maintain and consolidate a new Government at Paris.

We know from the Parliamentary Registers that not a single fee was paid to the councillors, commissioners, or masters of petitions, and that the very clerk had not the means with which to buy the parchment necessary to write down the deliberations and decisions of the Council.<sup>1</sup> The most absolute devotion of a people is sure to be destroyed by a course of misery. "Why," said the citizens of Paris, "should we remain under the sway of the English Kings when they do nothing for this goodly city, and allow us to perish for want?"<sup>2</sup> What especially roused these citizens was the state of penury in which the English left Madame Isabeau of Bavaria, who it is certain had acted well towards them. This Queen, who formerly lived in such a state of elegance in her mansion in the Rue Barbette, who was so given to luxury and such a votary of pleasure, had been obliged to sell her very garments to the Jews, and wore dresses of coarse cloth, which were in tatters. When complaint was made to the English, they accused her of still taking too much interest in her son, the Roitelet

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<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Register, May, 1432.

<sup>2</sup> Trade was stopped from Jan., 1433. ("Journal de Paris.")

de Bourges. They demanded that, to serve the cause of Henry VI., the aged Queen must openly declare, by an act to be signed by herself, that Charles VII. was only a bastard, and thus dishonour herself.<sup>1</sup>

The English were at this time in fear of an approaching rising of a party with the Duke of Orleans at its head. The young Duke Charles of Orleans, who had been made prisoner at the battle of Agincourt, was for long years kept close prisoner in the Tower of London, for the English barons regarded him as an obstacle to the peaceable reign of Henry VI. in France, and as a support to the house of Valois. Charles, like his father, the Duke of Orleans, who was murdered in the Rue Barbette, was a man of charming temper and surpassing sweetness. During his imprisonment in London he had found consolation for his misfortunes in poetry. His verses, written in a pure and melancholy strain, and which have been preserved to the present day, are dedicated to love and the recollections of his youth. Charles of Orleans loved his country; he groaned inwardly when he thought of the political dissensions which had dragged it to the depths of wretchedness; but in the hands of the English

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<sup>1</sup> Monstrelet, 1432.

he did not dare to speak all his thoughts. Poor captive ! who could restore him to liberty ?

De Ballader j'ai beau loisir  
Autres deduits me sont casés  
Prisonnier suis, d'amour martyr  
Hélas ! et n'est ce pas assez !<sup>1</sup>

Yes, this long and wretched captivity sufficed ! Charles d'Orleans had still a party in Paris that supported him. The fears of the English were not baseless, for their Prince was in alliance with Charles VII., and Madame Isabeau of Bavaria. He longed for peace, and with it the restoration of the royal house. The Armagnac party was reviving ; many prejudices against them had disappeared. The halles, the guilds, the parliament, the Court of accounts had enough of the English, who had brought only misery and wars on them ! The wretched condition in which they left Madame Isabeau of Bavaria caused much indignation. Not long afterwards, she fell ill and died,<sup>2</sup> and, what was a very sad thing, no pomp was observed at her

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<sup>1</sup> The poems of Charles d'Orleans have been often printed. The Abbé Salier was the first to make them known. (Memoires de l'Académie des inscriptions, vol. xiii.) The Nat. Library possesses many MSS. One very curious MS. exists at the library of Grenoble.

<sup>2</sup> Madame Isabeau died at the hôtel Saint-Paul, on the 4th September 1435.

obsequies. There was simply a religious service, at which the councillors and presidents who had always been devoted to the aged Queen, and who had been the sharers of her schemes and misfortunes, assisted. After the service in Notre Dame, the body of Isabeau of Bavaria was carried in a vessel to Saint Denis, accompanied only by four servants or pages. It is not true that it was abandoned and deserted by the attendants, as has been stated ; but it was impossible for a funeral procession to follow the high road to Saint Denis, which was at the time beset by bodies of armed and undisciplined men, who would have respected neither the bier, nor the ornaments of the funeral car.<sup>1</sup> The last link which bound the Parisians to the English cause had just been severed. In an expedition which he made into Normandy, the Duke of Bedford had died, during a hard fought and glorious campaign ; much beloved and respected at Paris, it was he, so to speak, who alone held aloft the banner where the arms of England and France were united. Of a grave and serious countenance, his word was as good as his body, and those who did not love him, could not fail to admire him.<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Bedford's death left

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<sup>1</sup> A marble monument was erected to Isabeau of Bavaria, besides that of Charles VI., at Saint-Denis.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Bedford died on the 14th September

no one at Paris to represent the authority of the King of England. There were only a few Anglo-Norman captains, who could not even speak the language of the people. Rumour got abroad that there was an impending peace between Charles VII and the Duke of Burgundy, and this popular peace was actually negotiated by the heir of the Duke of Orleans, who ought to have been kept apart from Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, by such an accumulation of grievances. All wished for peace and the restoration of Charles VII. At certain times, people only long for the end of civil war, and a regular government. The smallest event at such a crisis serves to accomplish what has been vainly attempted during twenty years of continued conflicts.

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XII.

**Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel at the  
Castles of Bourges and Chinon.**

(1430-1435.)

The favour of Agnes Sorel was no longer a mystery, and everything that had power or an

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1435. A manseum was erected to him in the cathedral of Rouen, beside the high altar. Louis XI. was advised to have it removed; he replied, "Let us not displace him dead, who when alive defied all the forces of France to make him budge."

instinct of chivalry had risen at her voice. This awakening extended to all the nobility of the southern provinces. Agnes, who had no liking for the old chiefs of the men-at-arms, who were worn out with the long civil war, loved, on the other hand, the young, polished, and elegant knights.<sup>1</sup> She had not herself abandoned her humble position with the Queen of Sicily, Duchess of Lorraine. We find in the original book of expenses of the said Queen the words, "ten pounds tournois for the wages of Agnes Sorel, one of her ladies-in-waiting." The register of the cathedral church of Loches states that Agnes Sorel made a present to the church of a small silver statue, to be placed in the chapel.<sup>3</sup> Agnes Sorel's autographs are rare : at this period of the Middle Ages women wrote little ; still the patience of scholars has discovered a letter written by Agnes Sorel to the Provost of Chesnaye-ez-Bois : " Monsieur le Prévôt, I have heard and been told that some men of Chesnaye have been apprehended by you under the suspicion of having taken certain quantities of wood from the forest of Chesnaye, by which I understand that some of the said persons are poor and wretched. Monsieur le Prévôt, I do not wish them further troubled with the same

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<sup>1</sup> Chronicle of Jean Chartier.

<sup>3</sup> Ann. 1431.

charge, and by acting on this without delay you will much oblige your good mistress, AGNES."<sup>1</sup>

From the terms of this letter, it seems clear that it was as the lady of Chesnaye, possessing the right of high and low justice, that Agnes wrote it, and not as having an exalted position at the Court of Charles VII. The words they contain are sweet and humane ; they indicate a soul easily touched by pity and mercy. But not long after the coquette, longing for finery, appears in another autograph letter written to Mademoiselle de Bonneville.

"To Mademoiselle de Bonneville, my good friend.<sup>2</sup> Mademoiselle, my good friend, I warmly recommend myself to you ; I beg of you to be so good as give the bearer Christopher, my grey dress trimmed with white, and every pair of gloves you find in the house, the said Christopher having lost my cabinet : you will also be good enough to receive from him my greyhound, carpet, which I should like you to keep with you and take great care of, and allow him to go to the chase with no one. He obeys neither whistle nor voice, and it would be as much as his life is worth were he to go ; his death would cause me great sorrow, and

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<sup>1</sup> It is not dated, but can be put down to 1430.

<sup>2</sup> This letter seems written during the hey-day of her favour.

would be far from causing you joy. Praying God that he keep you in his grace, my very good friend ; AGNES."

We have not here the country lady recommending her baillif not to prosecute the poor creatures who have stolen some wood in her domains. We have the woman who is already exalted to a position of love and confidence by the King. The lady of Bonneville is like a maid of honour to Agnes Sorel ; the formula of the letter is almost lordly ; she says "I pray God, etc." She has dogs, and goes hunting like King Charles VII. Agnes writes again to the same lady—"My good friend, we went hunting yesterday after a wild boar, whose scent your little dog Robin had found, but, unfortunately for himself, the little creature was killed by an arrow. Your good friend, AGNES."<sup>1</sup>

Poor Robin ! . . . Agnes Sorel is as much taken up with it, as with a personal friend. The pack of hounds was for the ladies of the country almost like a family ; hunting was the occupation of feudal life, and the ladies went with great courage to face the boar or stag. It is not said that they were ever frightened. They knew the names of the pointers, setters and coursing

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<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding my researches, I have failed to discover to what family this Madame de Bonneville belonged.

dogs. The greyhound with its pointed head, without any fine sense of smell, and without attachment, was still par excellence the dog of feudal days. It was reproduced on coats of arms, it was carved lying at the foot of its mistress, on her tomb; a faithful companion, it never left her. Swift and alert when off the leash, it followed the ladies' tracks into the thickest woods, and to tournaments. It wore her crest on its collar, and on the covering that protected it during the frosts of winter. Noble times of chivalry, what has become of you since the days when everything in history was ushered in by a fanfare of trumpets! Life was spent in the midst of legends, castellated manors, the chase and war, emotions that have their effect on great minds.

It was as much by the hardihood of her conduct and the grace of her conversation, as by the beauty of her person that Agnes Sorel found favour with King Charles VII., a man very easily moved in his thoughts and intentions, and, according to the chronicles of Burgundy, taking up and leaving his favourites with a strange facility. This mobility was partly, perhaps, accounted for by the very situation of the King, who was obliged to satisfy the wishes and caprices of all the chiefs who surrounded him, Bretons, Angevins, and Scots: the King was forced to give the preference sometimes to one, sometimes

to another, according to the forces they brought to support his cause.<sup>1</sup> "The love the King bore to Madame Agnes was, as everyone said, owing to her gaiety, her merry and laughing moods, and the purity and polish of her conversation, as well as to the fact that among ladies of fashion and beauty, she was the youngest and fairest ever seen. Besides all this, the said Agnes was very charitable, and gave large and liberal sums in alms, distributing from her own purse large gifts to the poor of the Church." This is how Jean Chartier expresses himself, whose father had lived at the small Court of the Roitelet de Bourges.<sup>2</sup>

This Court had become that of the Queen of Sicily and of all the house of Lorraine, of which Agnes was the vassal. Charles VII. had shown himself a great soldier: if there was little discipline in the war, no one could deny the valour and courage exhibited in it. Everything was in the hands of the Bretons and the Scots. It was in order to definitely acquire the help of the Scots

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<sup>1</sup> I am obliged to destroy an illusion as regards the disinterestedness of the Scots round Charles VII. They were very exacting in their demands for fiefs and concessions. The Earl of Buchan was made Constable of France; John Stewart, Count of Aubigni and then of Dreux; Earl Douglas was created Duke of Touraine. These are not the Scots of Walter Scott.

<sup>2</sup> Chronique de Jean Chartier.

that Charles affianced the Dauphin, then aged five years, to Margaret, daughter of James I., King of Scotland, who was then only three years old.<sup>1</sup> The Dauphin, who afterwards became Louis XI., and who had a great love for his mother, conceived from his very infancy a certain repugnance for Agnes Sorel. At the age of twelve, Margaret came to France with a fresh body of Scots, who were to serve in the royal cause. The castles of Chinon and Tours became brilliant Courts of chivalry. On every occasion that the knights were not engaged in war, they amused themselves with love, hunting, and tournaments. Agnes never ceased to inspire the King with "the thought of France's restoration." But the strong and powerful hand that accomplished the restoration was that of the Duke of Burgundy. With his aid alone could Paris return to Charles VII.

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### XIII.

#### **Treaties with the Duke of Burgundy.**

#### **Reconciliation with Charles VII.**

(1434-1435.)

From the depths of his hard captivity, Charles of Orleans had hopes by his gentleness and resig-

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<sup>1</sup>In 1438. The English tried to capture this Princess in her voyage across.

nation to prepare a general peace, not only between the great vassals and Charles VII., but also between Henry V., and him whom the King of England treated with so much disdain. Charles of Orleans, Prince and Poet as he was, and imbued with generous impulses, had no eyes to see the impassable obstacles that lay in the way of a peace between the pretenders, who both declared themselves with the same warmth, Kings of France, and claiming the same absolute right. How could he bring them together? The Supreme Pontiffs' hopes in this direction had proved abortive. The Congress of Arras had been dissolved by the action of the English plenipotentiaries, who had insisted on the recognition of Henry VI., as King of France, as a first and fundamental condition. The French on the other hand had equally laid down the condition that Charles VII. should be recognised as rightful heir to the crown of Charles VI.<sup>1</sup>

The attempts of the Congress of Arras having proved useless, it was of course necessary to consult the Duke of Burgundy, the only vassal who was sufficiently powerful to end the civil war by recognising the title of Charles VII: this

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<sup>1</sup> The conferences were at first held at the abbey of Saint Wast. Monstrelet enters into some details of them.

reconciliation, already tried on several occasions,<sup>1</sup> had never been effected, by reason of the deep-seated animosities of both parties. Was it not a Duke of Burgundy who had murdered a Duke of Orleans in the Rue Barbette? And it was by the friends and followers of Charles VII. that the Duke of Burgundy had been slain on the Bridge of Montereau: there was blood on the hands of both parties. But, naturally, by the lapse of time these gloomy deeds became buried in the past, and personal interest obtained supreme dominion. Nothing is forgotten so easily as a deed, however bloody, which belongs to the past, and which is no longer connected with the thoughts and needs of the present. The Dukes of Bourbon and Rochemont were taken as mediators, and they appointed the Counts of Clermont and Vendôme, the friends of the Duke of Burgundy, as deputies, to bring him round to a reconciliation. When the English absolutely declined to sign the peace, the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy resolved to conclude it without him, and under conditions which their friends had arranged.<sup>2</sup>

"The King disavowed the fatal affair of Montereau, the character of which was not

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<sup>1</sup> In conferences at Auxone and Corbeil.

<sup>2</sup> These negotiations are found at great length in Monstrelet, 1435.

specially described; he even engaged to seek out the authors of the assassination." This was certainly a difficult engagement, for was it not Tanneguy Duchâtel, the King's most faithful follower, who had been the first to lift his hand against Duke John? He also engaged to raise an expiatory chapel on the very bridge, and at the spot where the murder had been committed, and, in order to maintain the services of this chapel, a convent of monks was founded. When the expiation had been made, independently of an indemnity in gold coin, the King granted the Duke of Burgundy the counties of Mâcon, Châlons, and Langres, and the counties and cities of Auxerre, Montdidier, Péronne, Saint Quentin, Corbie, Amiens, the county of Artois, with the town of Boulogne-sur-Mer, and these new and ancient possessions were to be held thereafter without the obligation of paying homage. It was almost the reconstruction of a kingdom of Burgundy, as it existed before the great days of feudalism,<sup>1</sup> only the heir of each successive Duke had to make acknowledgement of his accession to the King of France. There was a curious clause in this agreement which indicates the caution with

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<sup>1</sup> In letters patent, Philip takes the kingly formula of "By the grace of God." (*Corps diplomat. anno 1435.*)

which money transactions were carried on. It takes care to declare that "the four hundred thousand pieces of gold paid by the King of France must be an alloy of sixty-four to the Troyes mark, and of eight ounces to the mark." With such frequent changes in the standard of money, it was essential to fix its value and the amount of alloy to be used in each coin.<sup>1</sup>

In order to secure the future of his kingdom, the Duke of Burgundy exacted as a pledge for its reality, the signature of the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI., and in his childish hand writing, Louis wrote: "Good Uncle Philippe, Duke of Burgundy, we promise you by the faith and oath of our body, to keep and hold in every particular, the treaty and agreement of the peace made between the king and you, in every respect, as it is here written down, without change or opposition; and when it shall please God that we come to the throne of France, we promise once more to give our letters patent to confirm these presents. Written by my hand and sealed with the secret seal of the Dauphin, with green wax, and red and green silk."<sup>2</sup> The great precautions demanded by the Duke of

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<sup>1</sup> The treaty is found in Monstrelet, that famous collector of original deeds. The treaty of Arras was ratified by the King in letters patent of December 10, 1435, and was sealed at Tours.

<sup>2</sup> Corps Diplomatique Ann., 1435.

Burgundy, and which limited the future power of France, were taken because the conditions were so hard for the King that there was always a fear lest they would not be carried out. The ceremonies that were celebrated in the cathedral of Arras on taking the oath to keep the peace were most solemn. As the Papal Legates had acted as mediators, three cardinals presided at this solemn service. There was a full choral mass, and the cathedral organs pealed forth hymns of joy. When the officiating cardinal had read the Holy Gospels, he placed the sacred book on the altar, covered with Byzantine paintings, and the envoys of France and Burgundy, attired in robes of ermine, with bared hands, took the oath of peace in the name of their masters, while the people showed their joy by shouts of "*Noël! Noël!*" The war was at an end!<sup>1</sup>

The same oath was repeated by Charles VII. at the Court of Bourges, and by the Duke of Burgundy at Dijon, which he was embellishing with his churches and palaces.

The King of France, brave as a paladin of chivalry when under the influence of Agnes Sorel, was, nevertheless, tired of a war which caused so much disorder, and subjected him to so much

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<sup>1</sup> All these ceremonies are described in Monstrelet, 1435.

insolence on the part of the leaders of his mercenaries. These chiefs fought even among themselves; the most devoted among them were simply insupportable.\* La Hire, for example, entered at all hours into the King's presence to dictate terms to him, and even impose on him his caprices. Peace was to put a stop to this great disorder, and this domineering of insubordinate mercenaries. It gave Charles VII. the support of the Duke of Burgundy; these two Princes deeply regretted the events of the past; Charles VII. passionately swore to punish the assassins of John of Burgundy, a vain promise, as the assassins were his own friends. The expiation, however, began by funeral chants; the monks, who were to occupy the monastery of Montereau, went in procession to the expiatory chapel, and there, amid the strains of the *Miserere*, they prayed for the pardon of Heaven for the assassins.

The Council of the King of England fully realised all the meaning of the Treaty of Arras. When the heralds-at-arms of the Duke of Burgundy came to London to announce that peace had been made with Charles VII., the Lords of the Privy Council manifested lively indignation; the young King, Henry VI., began to weep, saying

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\* See Olivier de La Marche, 1434-1435.

aloud "that he had lost his kingdom of France."<sup>1</sup> He noticed with pain that in the message from the Duke, lately his faithful friend, he no longer gave him the title of King of France, as in the past, and this omission caused him much bitterness. The English nation was indignant at the Burgundian party, and the Flemish merchants who resided in London for purposes of trade felt the effects of this feeling. Some of them were even pillaged, so angry were the people at the Burgundian party having so treacherously broken the alliance which united them with the English in a common cause.

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<sup>1</sup> These are his words, "I see clearly that my good uncle of Burgundy has been faithless towards me, and has become reconciled with him; this will endanger the sovereignties which I have in France." It has even been said that the Duke of Bedford died of grief, but this is a chronological error: the Duke-regent was already dead when the Treaty of Arras was signed.

END OF VOL. I.



Agnes Sorel and Chivalry in  
the XV. Century.





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**A King's Mistress,**

OR

CHARLES VII. & AGNES SOREL

AND

**Chivalry in the XV. Century,**

BY

**M. CAPEFIGUE.**



NOW FIRST TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

*WITH NOTES & ILLUSTRATIONS*

BY

EDMUND GOLDSMID, F.R.H.S.,

F.S.A. (Scot.)

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~~~~~  
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# AGNES SOREL

AND

## Chivalry in the XV. Century.



XIV.

### The Corporations and Guilds of Paris. Restoration of Charles VII.

(1435-1438.)

It is a harsh necessity attached to a power that is enfeebled to become suspicious, severe and sometimes even cruel until its fall. Such was the case with the English after the death of the Duke of Bedford and the waning of the attachment of the Parisians for their cause. They had even failed in ordinary sagacity in not showing honour to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria when in her coffin. The circle of their friends had narrowed in the markets and among the artisans, by whom they had formerly been greatly liked: it was said that

Maggs Library 1943. 2d ed.

they favoured Normandy more than Paris.<sup>2</sup> They had exacted from the Parisians a new oath of fidelity to Henry VI., King of France and England, a kind of guarantee which avails little in times of danger. A proclamation had been made declaring to all loyal subjects that the Duke of York was appointed Regent of the kingdom in the name of King Henry VI., but matters were so disorganised that the Duke did not even cross to the Continent, and the direction of the English Government in France was left to brave warrior chiefs, who made movements to the right or left without any preconceived plan, at Saint Denis and Pontoise: the struggle was carried on on both sides with a feeling of desperation; the environs of Paris were ravaged.

The English party had still, however, a considerable hold on the popular classes in Paris, in the markets, and that for several reasons. When parties, as I have said, have conceived certain hatreds and certain repugnances, they prefer anything, and any solution of the difficulty, to the triumph of the power they detest and which they have crushed. They have no longer any eyes for their country, and, at need, the foreign invader

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<sup>2</sup> An edict or bill of Henry VI., King of France founded the University of Caen. These letters of Henry, "*ad perpetuam rei memoriam*," are dated from his favourite town of Rouen.

becomes a support and a hope. What formed the main strength of the English was the fact that a large number of people were compromised in regard to Charles VII. The Parliament, the Châtelet, the mayor, and the magistrates had all pronounced for Henry VI. : they had hailed the advent of his power and had supported the Duke of Bedford. Had they not every reason to fear a reaction and a bitter vengeance should fortune favour Charles ?

Quite other causes, again, tended to the King's restoration : the peace with the Duke of Burgundy gave a new direction to the policy of Charles VII. Saint Andrew's Cross, so beloved of the populace, was united to the fleurs de lys. The hand which was now supporting Charles VII.'s restoration had formerly been itself the instrument whereby the revolt was raised. No one could be found guilty, now that the greatest sinner in this respect had been, not only pardoned, but placed at the head of the King's party. Letters of indemnity, cancelling the past, were issued by Charles and circulated almost publicly through Paris. The King promised never to recall what had taken place at Paris, provided that henceforth the loyalty of the city were sincere.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, the Duke of

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<sup>1</sup> These letters of absolution had been given at Poitiers in February, 1435. They are found in the

Burgundy, impatient at the obstinate rejection of the conditions of peace by the Council of England, suddenly declared war on that country. From that moment, the archers of Burgundy began to make their appearance in the environs of Paris. The cross of Saint Andrew was seen not far from the ramparts, at the gates of the city, under chieftains formerly well known and beloved by the populace, especially the marshal de Lisle Adam, one of the most ardent of Burgundians, and one who had formerly been most compromised in opposition to the Dauphin. It was possible for the citizens, so long in a state of revolt, to treat with such a conspicuous rebel converted to Charles's cause, and that too as with a comrade and fellow conspirator. Were they to open the gates to him, they had no cause to fear reprisals, and the less so, since it was now merely a question of handing over Paris to the Duke of Burgundy, and had nothing to do with the banner of the King, emblazoned with its fleurs-de-lys.<sup>1</sup> Restorations are frequently brought about by the chiefs of the rebellion, when they find security and advan-

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appendix to the *Histoire de Charles VII.*, p. 795. They were officially published at Paris only in April, 1436.

<sup>1</sup> The leader of the citizens who took the chief part in the restoration was a draper, of the name of Pierre Lhuillier or Lallier. (*Journal de Paris*, 1436.)

tage offered them, and when an agreement can put an end to a civil war.

The gates of Paris were accordingly secretly opened to the Marshal de Lisle Adam, by some of the citizens, and the English found themselves supported only by the implacable enemies of the restoration, that is to say, by the rabble to whom disorder and confusion are not displeasing.<sup>1</sup> Almost taken by surprise, the English archers under Lord Willoughby, retired in good order, and with invincible courage to the gates of the Bastille, of Vincennes and of Bicêtre, which were the only fortified posts left to them. The Marshal de Lisle Adam and the Burgundians became masters of Paris, and thus the first step towards the restoration of Charles VII. was taken. That night the people read under the glare of torches, an ordinance "which declared all the faults and acts of the past committed against our Lord the King forgotten and forgiven."<sup>2</sup> The object of this proclamation was to strengthen the weakest hearts, and reassure guilty consciences, while the English shut up in the Bastille, still kept up a slight

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<sup>1</sup> The popular leader who was most devoted to the English cause was the butcher Legoix, a very well known figure in the revolts under Charles VI. The surrender of Paris took place on Easter Wednesday, in April 1436.

<sup>2</sup> This was the edict of Bourges mentioned above,

cannonade on the city. Dunois, the Marshal de Lisle Adam, the Constable, the Count of Richemont, along with the knights and archers of the King and Burgundy, besieged the Bastille, in hopes of its surrender. After some days, the Bastille and Winchester (Bicêtre) surrendered, and thus the English entirely abandoned the city of Paris, which they had occupied for more than twenty years. The death of the Duke of Bedford had done much to weaken their popularity; they were nothing but a foreign army of occupation set over the city. The Duke had caused liberal additions to be made to the public works, and Paris owed to him municipal monuments, churches, mansions and even aqueducts. The Duke of Bedford possessed some personal characteristics of a serious and agreeable nature, but the English captains, and especially Lord Willoughby, lost favour through the haughtiness of their manners and the overbearing tone of their commands; they took so little interest in the affairs of the capital, that they allowed the houses to fall into ruins and the market places to get out of repair, and in general, acted like men who knew well that sooner or later they would be compelled to quit the city.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Already the Duke of York, who had replaced the Duke of Bedford in the regency, was becoming the object of popular scorn :

“Et bien la peau nous fourbirons

Couplets composed in defiance of the English were sung about the streets :

Le mieux est de partir sur l'heure  
Et de ne plus faire ici demeure.

The news of the surrender of Paris found the King still at Bourges and Chinon. The King did not seem anxious to return to his good city, after the events that had taken place in it : every kind of concession was made to the burghers and populace. The past seemed so completely forgotten that the most seditious of the rebel leaders were recalled, not excepting the butchers Saint Yon and Legoux, who had been the principal ringleaders of the revolts, and who had left the city with the English. The Parliament, which was devoted to Henry VI., and which had sat at Paris, was confirmed in its functions, although there was a Royal Parliament at Poitiers with the lawful King.<sup>1</sup> All these assurances seemed insufficient for the persons who were compromised ; murmurs were heard on all sides ; the very city populace and corporations, which were willing to pay extra taxes at the time of the insurrection,

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A la venue du duc d' York ;  
Retournez vers le vent du Nord  
Et ne parlez plus de combattre.  
Que la fièvre vous puisse abattre !"

<sup>1</sup> A section of this Parliament was reunited to that of Paris.

bitterly exclaimed against the slightest levy of money necessitated by the requirements of the war. But such is the weak spot in restorations: they exhaust themselves in doing well and yet are only considered as governments of reaction, unless a strong power (like that of Louis XI.) cuts short the discontent with an inflexible and firm hand.

Meanwhile the Constable wrote to Charles VII., saying that his presence was indispensable to the good government of Paris and of France. Agnes Sorel had just persuaded the King to lay siege to Montereau, an important point for uniting the south and the centre of the monarchy. Montereau once taken, the King directed his movements towards Melun and Fontainebleau, and then, leaving the forest of Sénart on his left, he marched on Vincennes, Bagnolet and Pantin.<sup>1</sup>

On the 12th of November, 1437, King Charles VII., (whom God preserve) came to Saint Denis, to pass the night in that abbey, which had formerly been the royal abode of the young English King, Henry VI., at the time of his solemn entry into Paris. On the following day, Charles VII. came to Chapelle Saint Denis, where the provost, merchants and magistrates, followed by their men-at-arms, ran to receive

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<sup>1</sup> Charles VII. was afraid to march straight on Paris. (Monstrelet, 1437.)

him.<sup>1</sup> There was a repetition of the same ceremonies and the same festivities as had been held for the English King, Henry VI.; there was the same white and blue drapery, the same attendants with their red and green head-dresses; the rector and members of the University, who had formerly proscribed the "Kingle of Bourges," now received him with shouts; he was presented with the same keys that had been handed to King Henry. At Saint Lazare there was seen descending from the sky the coat of arms of France, borne by the very angels who had formerly descended with that of England. Poets made the very same verses in praise of Charles VII.:

Très excellent roi et seigneur,  
Les manants de votre cité  
Vous reçoivent en tout honneur  
Et en très grant humilité.

The same blue daïs was used, excepting that it was covered with fleurs de lys, *azur*, instead of with leopards, *gules*; the fountains ran white and red wine and hypocras; mysteries were played; the people cried, as they had done before, *Noël!* For whom had the people of Paris not cried

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicle of Saint Denis; Journal d'un Bourgeois* in Secousse, by Martial de Paris. There is a chronicle which cannot be too much studied. *Vigiles de la mort du feu roi Charles VII., en neuf psaumes, et neuf leçons, contenant la Chronique.* Paris, 1493, 4to, written by Martial de Paris.

*Noël!* The ornaments which had been used at Notre Dame for the coronation of Henry VI. were employed in the same way for the vespers and vigils which were said for Charles VI., and the same benedictions from heaven were called down on his head. Government: change; ceremonies and adulations never do.

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XV.**Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel at Paris.**

(1437-1439.)

Among the ladies, old and young, that accompanied the Queen to Paris at the time of her solemn entry into the city, the citizens and country people had noticed one who was especially beautiful, decked with pearls and diamonds, and riding on a richly caparisoned palfrey. The people called her by her name, and said she was Agnes Sorel, the companion of the King in his pleasures, and, as among the rabble, the restoration of Charles VII. had many enemies, several murmurs rose against her whom the bishop of Thérouine (so loved at Saint-Eustache) had called the new Herodias, and had described as a beast of the Apocalypse. Thus Agnes Sorel, when informed of these murmurs, exclaimed in a moment of sadness: "The Parisians are but villains; if I had known that they would not have done me

more honour, I should never have set foot in their city."<sup>1</sup> Agnes Sorel had a keen sense of the services she had rendered to the King by awakening him from his apathy; his restoration not finding popular favour, everything that had helped to bring it about was by no means liked by the Parisians. She could recall with what zeal they had persecuted Joan of Arc; her accusation had emanated from Paris.

Still the people were not wrong in those sad murmurings against so much luxury and riches displayed in the midst of such wide-spread misery. The winter had been very severe; there had been one hundred and thirty-three days of such intense frost that the Seine was frozen so as to allow waggons to pass over it. The result of this had been a famine, contagious epidemics and wide-spread poverty. The Chronicle of Saint Denis mentions that wolves had invaded the town, that they devoured the living and unearthed the dead, even in the Cemetery of the Saints Innocents.<sup>2</sup> A royal charter awarded a bonus of 17 *sols tournois* to every man, civilian or military, who brought in a wolf's head. Was it not odious to see the contrast between so much misery and so

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Chartier.

<sup>2</sup> "Chronique de Saint Denis," ad ann. 1437-1438.

much unbridled luxury, in the festivities at Paris, at the Tournelles, and at the old Louvre ?<sup>1</sup>

The festivities of this time had a peculiar character; they presented a mixture of worldly pomp and theology; at Tournelles, the scenes of the Passion were represented; a fountain had been erected, surmounted by a lily of great size, the flowers and leaves of which cast floods of hypocras; in the midst of the fountain, dolphins of wood, covered with silver, swam about on the surface of the water. At the end of a terrace, John the Baptist showed the Heavenly Lamb surrounded by angels, who sang hymns, and at his side were Saint Thomas, Saint Denis, Saint Maurice and others of the blessed: beneath was Sainte Geneviève spinning, as represented in the legend. The mysteries of the Passion were played by the pilgrims from Palestine, who sang:

Ci gist l'amère passion  
De notre Sauveur Jesus Christ.  
Et sa crucification.  
Et de Juda le grand delit  
Qui en un arbre se pendit  
Par sa grande desesperance ;  
D'où en enfer il descendit  
Où est puni de son offense.

With these holy ideas were mingled worldly

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<sup>1</sup> The King had just convoked the States General at Orleans (1437). "Recueil des Etats Généraux," vol. ix., p. 134.

pleasures, such as balls and masquerades, over which Agnes Sorel, who was called the Queen of Beauty, presided: this name, which suited her sweet person so well, was given her from the pleasant *Manoir of Beauté-sur-Marne*, built by Charles V., and already celebrated in song by Eustache Deschamps, in one of his ballads.<sup>1</sup>

Sur tous les lieux plaisans et agréables  
Que l'on pourrait en ce monde trouver  
Édifié de manoirs convenables,  
Gais et jolis pour voire et demourer  
Joyeusement, puis devant vous prouver  
Que c'est à la fin du bois  
De Vincennes que fit faire le roi  
Charles que Dieu donne paix, joie et santé,  
Son fis aîné dauphin de Viennois  
Donna le nom à ce lieu de Beauté.

Et c'est bon droit, car moult est délectable ;  
L'on y oit le rossignol chanter,  
Marne l'ençant, les hauts bois profitables  
Couvrent les daims,  
Des oiselets ouïr la douce voix  
Dans la saison de printemps et d'été  
Où gentil mai qui est si noble mois  
Donna ce nom à ce lieu de Beauté.

Les prés ençoignent les jardins délectables  
Les beaux preaulx, fontaine belle et clere,

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<sup>1</sup> A large part of the poems of Eustache Deschamps are still in manuscript; he, best of all poets has described the times of chivalry and tournaments.

Vignes aussi et les prés arables  
Moulins tournans, beaux plains à regarder  
Et beaux viviers pour less poissons  
Où l'on peut se retraire en sureté,  
Pour tous les points le beau prince courtois  
Donna ce nom à ce lieu de Beauté.

This was the pleasant "manoir of Beauty" which Charles VII. gave with all its appurtenances, to Agnes Sorel, who took henceforth the name of "Dame de Beauté;" it was also the name by which she was described in the ballads and at court receptions, and that with which she signed historical charters.

It was to this Castle of Beauty that Charles VII. frequently came to regain his courage, in the midst of the sadness and discouragements of his Restoration. Paris was in the possession of the King, but the English still kept hold of Normandy, Guienne and the whole of Gascony. Ten leagues from Paris the standard emblazoned with the leopard was seen fluttering in defiance, and Pontoise was the headquarters of the English army. Great disorder reigned in the armies of the French King. The Jacquerie, a tumult of peasants and serfs, raged far and wide. The chiefs of the great companies aspired to resume their ancient dominion over the councils of Charles VII.<sup>1</sup> It was Agnes

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<sup>1</sup> The most undaunted and most insolent of all was Chabannes; the King said to him one day—"The

Sorel who supplied all the energy which the King displayed. When the taxes were not paid and the States General held at Orleans only gave subsidies on very hard conditions, Agnes Sorel engaged her friend Jacques Cœur to make heavy advances to the extent of ten million crowns, to recover Normandy by force of arms.

The King's decided triumph in the war on which he was entered depended on the capture of Pontoise, which was in the hands of the English, commanded by Talbot the brave. The King was surrounded by the flower of his knights—Saint Paul, Lahire, Xaintrailles, and Chabannes himself; Agnes Sorel came to live in the camp to awaken the King's courage and his power of will. The siege lasted a long time, and, like the Homeric heroes, the besiegers and besieged used to dare each other. The English shouted and sang all kinds of raillery against the French.

Vous contrefaites les vaillans  
Il semble qu'ayez tout conquis ;<sup>a</sup>

English call Blanchefort and you captains of flayers." Chabannes answered—"When I slay your enemies, their skin profits you more than me." Compare Jean Chartier, Monstrelet, and the *Life of Chabannes*.

<sup>a</sup> At this time the French had not won any decisive success, and the King was obliged to take refuge at Saint Denis; the English re-appeared before Montmartre. ("Chronique de Saint Denis," 1440-1441.)

Vous vous dites bons bataillans  
 Dès l'heure que futes naquis,  
 Bien paraît qu'être fort peureux,  
 Oncques ne futes si heureux  
 De nous venir aux champs combattre,  
 Grand orgueil est bon à rabattre.

To these insolent words the French replied :

Votre grand orgueil rabattrons  
 Et bien la peau vous fourbirons  
 A la venue du duc d'York,  
 Tous les natifs de Normandie  
 Qui on votre parti tenu  
 Sont traîtres, je n'en doute mie,  
 Autant le grand que le menu.

It was during the siege of Pontoise that the most splendid and noble scenes of chivalry were enacted. Struggles, body to body, lance to lance, sword and battleaxe to sword and battleaxe, succeeded each other daily; and chivalry threw a ray of glory over the cruellest scenes of a bloody war.

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#### XVI.

#### Chivalry in the Fifteenth Century.

In the troubled and agitated period which elapsed between the reigns of John and Charles VII., the splendid institution of chivalry which had ruled and purified the middle ages, was effaced and almost entirely disappeared; and it was in vain that half a century later, Francis the First tried to

revive it : the great institution of chivalry found its grave at Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt. Everything that dies leaves a void, and inspires a feeling of sadness, and it is with a certain feeling of melancholy, that I proceed to study the institution of chivalry, and to inquire into its true character, as displayed in our history.

The scholars, who have sought the origin of chivalry in the cold and aristocratic institutions of the Romans, have taken the name for the thing signified. Roman chivalry was a title, a dignity, a prerogative, requisite for obtaining a seat at the circus and in the comitia.<sup>1</sup> Nor is this origin discoverable among the Germans, where Montesquieu has even sought feudalism ; there was, among the Germans, courage, a certain respect for women, and a worship for the divinities who, under the tall oaks, and in the sacred groves, uttered their oracles. But such an institution as this was not chivalry, with its fine feelings, its holy obligations, its inflexible law of duty. The Paladins of Charlemagne (with their gigantic stature, their great swords,<sup>2</sup> their enchanted

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<sup>1</sup> *Introduction aux mémoires sur la chevalerie*, by M. M. de Saint-Palaye. Du Cange, *Gloss. latin*, voc. *Miles militaris*.

<sup>2</sup> The epics of Charlemagne all date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

weapons and their great battle-axes), Roland, Otger the Dane, the Duke Naymes were not knights such as the middle ages produced. The tenth century, which saw the downfall of the Carolingians, was a period of disorder and confusion; the Gallo-Roman organisation, which had been maintained in some faint tracings of its former glory by the *missi dominici* of Charlemagne and Louis the Debonnaire, had left no further trace. The territory of the Gauls, in the north and south, presented the aspect of a boundless desert; the charters of the tenth century speak only of immense forests and plains covered with undergrowth, tenanted by wild animals. The men-at-arms were scarcely restrained in their violence by the sanctity of the monasteries, or softened by the recital of legends, by the shells and bread-sack of the pilgrim, and by the prayer of the poor hermit, a man lost to the world, and living on some mountain summit or in the gloomy depths of some pathless wood. Clteaux, Clairvaux, holy abbeys, how often have you proved a shelter against men of violence and ruthless barbarity! Poor widows and orphans, how often have you felt the oppressive cruelty of men! The Flemish legend of Geneviève of Brabant, and her treacherous senechal is the truest picture of the tenth century.

At this time, under the influence of the Church, an order, that of chivalry, was founded, to defend

the weak against the strong, right against violence, and truth against oppression.

La veuve et l'orphelin défendre,  
Estre hardi et le peuple garder,  
Prudommes, loyaux, sans rien de l'autrui prendre,  
Ainsi se doit chevalier gouverner.<sup>1</sup>

Chivalry was an order, entrance to which was only possible after long trials and a peculiar education. From the moment the child could walk alone in the castle, he was page or varlet ;<sup>2</sup> Jehan de Saintre, when a boy of thirteen, was already page of honour to King John. Pages and varlets were taught to love God and the ladies, who themselves instructed them in the art of serving them faithfully. The doctrine of helping the feeble and small was most carefully inculcated. "Courtesy shown to inferiors comes from an open and sweet temper, and the inferior to whom it is shown considers himself honoured thereby."<sup>3</sup>

It was only after this long and pleasant apprenticeship that a youth was raised to the

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<sup>1</sup> Eustache Deschamps says again :  
Chevalier en ce monde-ci,  
Ne peuvent vivre sans souci.  
Ils doivent le peuple défendre,  
Et leur sang pour la foi espandre.

<sup>2</sup> *Ordre de Chevalerie*, fol. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Compare these works—*Traité de l'espée Française*, by Savaron ; *Théâtre d'Honneur*, by Favin ; and *Traité de la Chevalerie Ancienne et Moderne*, by Ménetrier.

rank of esquire; the esquire carried the shield and the lance of the knight, and held his horse by the bridle. "Then were seen approaching my Lord Gauvain and two esquires, one of whom led his charger by the bridle, and carried his sword, and the other his helmet and his shield." The esquire could only ride on a "*rousin*," or steed of poor appearance.<sup>1</sup>

Le chevalier erra pensant  
Et l'écuyer chevaucha avant  
Sur son rousin à grand allure.

"I have heard it said by the old captains," says Brantôme, "that the first or chief esquires of the Kings of France must always be near them." This duty of the esquire had nothing dishonourable or lowering in it, even rendered to simple knights.

Les jeunes gens poursuivaient  
Lances et buçines portaient  
Des anciens chevaliers  
Les coutumes apprenaient  
De chevacier . . . .<sup>2</sup>

After a long period of squireship, the candidate was admitted to the title of knight after some great tournament, where he had shown superior

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<sup>1</sup> "Romance of Lancelot of the Lake."

<sup>2</sup> MS. Poems of Eustache Deschamps, p. 77, col. 1 and 2.

pro prowess ; for we must note that knighthood had the pre-eminence in honour, and that every knight had a higher office than a thousand men-at-arms. We need not, then, be astonished at the solemn ceremonies that accompanied the reception of a knight into the order. "He who grants the order of knighthood ought to know from him who receives it, with what intention he wishes to assume it; for if it be with the intention of becoming rich, idle, or from mere ambition, he is unworthy of it."<sup>1</sup> The squire who desired to be knighted had to kneel; and "the knight had to gird him with his sword, in token of chastity, justice and charity." The purpose, then, of the order was to recall equity, gentleness and charity into the midst of this society of the Middle Ages, by the help of God, Our Lady, and Saint Denis. Sometimes a simple maiden, the symbol of weakness, armed the knight; "with her fair white and delicate hands she began to lace his armour on."

"The duty of the knight is to support widows, orphans, and persons in evil straits and feeble." According to the romance of *Lancelot of the Lake*, the requisites of the knight are—"Strength, endurance, gentleness, dignity of bearing, courtesy and munificence."

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<sup>1</sup> Chevalier de la Tour, *Guidon des Guerres*, "Le Signes du fort Chevalier," p. 90.

Des vaillans les prouesses comprendre  
Afin qu'il puisse les grands faits achever,  
Comme jadis fist le roi Alexandre,  
Ainsi se doit chevalier gouverner.<sup>1</sup>

It was in the midst of the violent society of the tenth century that this splendid religious and military association made its appearance and began to develop. To the most enterprising courage it joined the deepest generosity, the most complete abdication of all personality and of all brutal violence: substituted courtesy and politeness for that barbarous life of selfishness lived by the French and German lords of the first and second dynasties.<sup>2</sup> By the side of this chivalry, was systematised feudalism, that splendid and great system which re-established the hierarchy, and the bonds of obedience and respect throughout the whole community, in the midst of general confusion of ideas. Rank, property, everything was organised into such a perfect system of fiefs and sub-fiefs, that, in fact, the whole kingdom was connected with the towers of the Louvre. Chivalry and feudalism founded society and government in France, and gave to the manners of the people that politeness and courtesy which remained as the elevated type of the national character. The knights devoted themselves to

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<sup>1</sup> *Poésies d'Eustache Deschamps*, fol. 309, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *La Colombière, Théâtre d'Honneur et de Chevalerie*.

the protection of feebleness, under the symbol of the Virgin Mary, who was supreme in the Middle Ages, and thus raised the condition of women.

What character is finer than that of the knight-errant ! Surely Miguel Cervantes is to blame for turning such a character into ridicule in "Don Quixote," and for exalting materialism, sensuality and selfishness in the person of Sancho. Behold a true knight-errant ! He belonged frequently to an exalted line of kings, princes or barons ; he could live comfortably in his castle, surrounded by festivities and tourneys, and intoxicated with feasting and sensual passion ; all at once he abandoned these delights, and for what ? To fulfil a vow of knighthood, to penetrate the depths of obscure forests, and protect women and orphans, without looking for recompense and without caring even for life ; the knight slept on the hard earth,<sup>1</sup> pursued the spoiler of the weak and the false vassal ; he appeared suddenly at judicial combats to take on him the defence of forsaken prisoners. What noble feelings must have been inspired by the reading of those *Chansons de Gestes* which treated of chivalrous deeds ! Their existence was strange ; the knight was recognised from afar when he suddenly

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<sup>1</sup> Qui bien et mal ne sait souffrir,  
A grant honneur ne peut venir.  
(*Petit Jehan de Saintrel*, p. 136.)

appeared, with his vizor lowered, to defend a desperate cause. It was the Knight of the Swan, or of the Unicorn, with his white or black plume. Whence came he? What was his name or his estate? He was unknown, and yet he was surrounded with renown and respect. When wounded, he was cared for by throngs of noble maidens, who would tend his wounds and cure them with what were thought enchanted balms, a wonderful art cultivated by the noble ladies of the manor. "'Your arm seems to be troubling you.'—'I' faith,' replied the knight, 'if such be the case, I ask you, madam, to be good enough to tend it.' Then the lady called one of her daughters, whose name was Helen, who examined his arm, and found that it was out of its place, and took such care of it that it was set again."<sup>1</sup>

What were the causes of the decline and fall of this noble institution, which had been such an important factor in elevating and purifying society? The discovery of firearms caused, in my opinion, rather a change in the order and issue of battles than in the feelings of courage and honour. Such sentiments were affected most of all by the contact of mercenary foreigners, by the introduction into the armies of Lombard archers, tribes of salaried men-at-arms, and peasants of the com-

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<sup>1</sup> *Perceforest*, MS., fol. 169.

munes. In the midst of these mercenaries, who were undoubtedly brave, though freebooters and devoid of all conscience, could chivalry remain pure and maintain itself in its generous madness of devotion? It had been conquered and almost destroyed at Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt; it dragged out a weary existence under Charles V., a prince who was an enemy to sentiment, and in the midst of civil disorders and the selfishness of the mercenary soldiers and craftsmen of Ghent, Malines, Brussels and Paris.<sup>1</sup>

After King John's time, chivalry was in a state of collapse; Eustache Deschamps notices already in his time this sad change in noble and generous feelings:

Or Mesbahis quand chacun jongle et ment  
Car meilleur temps fut le temps ancien  
S'Arment,<sup>2</sup> savetiers et charbons (charbonniers)  
Escuyers s'appellent garçons  
Or est venu le temps  
Et or est la raison  
Plus appartient bordiaux  
Qu'il n'a autre maison.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Les Vigiles* of Charles VII. already complain of this love of gain:

Marchandise lors estait en sa vogue,  
En son grant bruit triomphe et s'en gogue  
Pour les grands biens

Que l'on gagnait pour soi et pour les siens.

<sup>2</sup> Eustache Deschamps's Manuscript Poems, p. 160, col. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The poet exalts ancient times, as may be seen in

No doubt there have been, in all ages, enthusiasts of the past as compared with the present ; but the chivalry of the Middle Ages closed with the first Valois. At that time a new military society, in the hands of the captains of the mercenary companies, and the leaders of the markets and crafts, sprang up. Chivalry still remained in name, but it existed only in the past. Great disorders reigned, but in the sentiments of duty or of honour no means of repression were to be found. The society of the fifteenth century assumed a cruel and bloody character ;<sup>1</sup> the Middle Ages were free from these excesses ; there reigned over chivalrous society a feeling of loyal generosity. Scattered over the country were many fierce and cruel barons ; but knight-errantry was there to besiege and demolish these nests where vultures took shelter ; combatants fought loyally, with the soothing sounds of legends and songs of trouvères and troubadours in their ears.

This, however, was no longer the case when foreign mercenaries, the people of the markets, the workmen of the guilds, and the chiefs of the great companies made their appearance in war :

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the following lines :

“ Les chevaliers étaient vertueux

Et par amour pleins de chevalerie.”

<sup>1</sup> The reader of Brantôme will notice the cruelty that reigned among men-at-arms in the 16th century.

cruelty now assumed the ascendant. The annals of the fifteenth century are horrible even to read. Now that knight-errantry no longer existed to repress the violence of the great feudatories, they remained rude and implacable in character. We read accounts of the war between the Burgundians and Armagnacs that make our blood run cold. There was here no chivalry ; the only impression it left was a gentlemanly spirit, gallantry, and the refined and exalted feelings that are still found in some of the French nobility. Just as, in the Middle Ages, the worship of the Virgin elevated women and ennobled the finest instincts of their nature, so chivalry formed the best part of the national character, all that remains of patriotism and devotion, the self-denial of the soldier, and the love of military glory.

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XVII.

**The Dauphin. His Hatred of  
Agnes Sorel.**

(1438-1441.)

The most persevering of the enemies of Agnes Sorel was the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI. Affianced to Margaret of Scotland at the age of five, at the time of Charles VII.'s greatest difficulties at Bourges, he had welcomed with deference his young bride, who was of a melancholy and

poetical disposition. The Dauphin himself was learned; Margaret, one of the most precious gems of the Court of Charles VII., loved the old songs of the trouvères and troubadours. She was somewhat extravagantly fond of poets, and it is said that one day, having found Master Alain Chartier<sup>1</sup> asleep in one of the apartments of the castle of Chinon, she had kissed him on the mouth to breathe in the beauties of his poetry, an action which savoured of an indiscreet enthusiasm, and which did not agree with the ideas of the Dauphin, a man of a restless and morose disposition.

In his early years he had acted like a brave and noble knight; in the train of the King, his father, he had fought bravely in battle and siege. He made friends of almost all the discontented people who were irritated by the new favours shown to Agnes Sorel, for whom the Dauphin had conceived a violent hatred. After the King's entry into Paris, there was a disturbance caused by a rising of the Great Companies and peasants, a "Praguerie," as it was called then, after the revolts of the Bohemians raised by John Huss and Jérôme of Prague. Under the influence of Agnes

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<sup>1</sup>Two volumes of poetry by Alain Chartier had specially struck Margaret of Scotland; they were, *La belle Dame sans Merci* and *Demandes d'Amour*. They are both found in the rare edition of Galliot Dupré, Paris, 1529, 4to.

Sorel, Charles VII. had fought against this conspiracy, which had the support of the leaders of the men-at-arms.<sup>1</sup> It is seldom that a change in a military organisation (the transition from disorder to order) does not produce this kind of rebellion. The Dauphin, who was for a very short time at the head of this rising, was compelled to submit, without ever pardoning Agnes Sorel for having armed the King. Agnes had been attached by the liveliest friendship to Margaret of Scotland, a lady of a chivalrous and enthusiastic temper. Margaret of Scotland, suspected by the Dauphin of having betrayed his faith, died at the age of twenty, with these sad words on her lips : "*Fil de la vie ; qu'on ne m'en parle plus.*"<sup>2</sup>

The Dauphin, at liberty after the suppression of the conspiracy, appeared to be reconciled to Agnes Sorel, and served Charles VII. with fidelity and courage in the war against England. Those who have represented Louis XI. after his accession as a cowardly and low-minded prince, and as shunning war, have not studied this first part of his life : he was one of the bravest captains among the troops ; he was seen at the sieges of Pontoise, Dieppe and Réole, exhibiting the most brilliant courage against the English. But the more

<sup>1</sup> The principal chiefs of the "Praguerie" were the Bastard of Bourbon, Boucicault, Sanglier, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Chartier.

honour he gained as a knight, the more did he seek to gain over partisans to himself and form devoted friendships. At the siege of Dieppe he gave his chief confidence to a rude captain, called Tristan, a name frequently met with in romances: Lancelot of the Lake, at the time of his *souffrance d'amour*, had taken this surname of Tristan,<sup>1</sup> and a *chanson de gestes* had Tristan le Leonais for its hero. No adventurer was braver than Tristan, who had been engaged in wars for fifteen years; he had been among the forty-nine men-at-arms whom Dunois had chosen to help him to carry on the siege and take possession of Fronsac.<sup>2</sup>

Tristan had been dubbed a knight at the hands of the Bastard of Orleans, at the breach in the walls, and the latter had recognised his bravery. The Dauphin took brave Tristan into his special service, and made him provost, which gave him the right of administering justice on all those engaged in the war—a justice which was frequently expedited by the hangman's noose. Tristan took as his companion his squire, Trois Echelles, an active yeoman (this surname is often mentioned in the chronicles). Tristan and Trois

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes that of the *Beaux ténébreux*: "Aventures de Tristan et de la belle Iseult." This romance has often been printed.

<sup>2</sup> The 20th June, 1445.

Echelles had the charge of keeping order in the Dauphin's Court, a task which was no easy one in the midst of these undisciplined warriors. The miniatures in the manuscripts, when they represent a troop on the march or a camp of warriors, are always sure to give each tree a peculiar fruit, the body of a yeoman swaying from the branches. This sad spectacle was reproduced two centuries later by Callot, in his admirable engravings on the misfortunes of war. At this time, the noise of the bodies of the men who were hung, as they swayed in the wind, produced a singular music in the midst of these troops of adventurers on their march.<sup>1</sup>

After this glorious campaign, the Dauphin returned to Paris, where Charles VII. had his residence, dividing his time between the castle *des Tournelles* and the Manor of Beauty, the favourite residence of Agnes Sorel. The chronicles say they had three children, and this open and scandalous attachment was borne with great resignation by the Queen, who had a true love for Charles VII.; but the Dauphin did not cease to manifest a righteous indignation against Agnes: was it a tender attachment for his outraged mother? Was it because Agnes Sorel held in

<sup>1</sup> Of these disciplinary measures of war, Brantôme has left us a very curious description in the portrait of the Constable de Montmorency and his *patenôtres*.

her hand the sceptre of France and because she wielded it firmly for the repression of every revolution, and that thus she had guessed the Dauphin's impatience to assume the crown? The chroniclers mention that the Dauphin reached such a pitch of anger as to give Agnes Sorel a slap on the face,<sup>1</sup> and that she thereafter withdrew from the Court to reside at the castle of Loches, in Touraine.

Touraine, Berri and Orléanais! Were not these the fairest tracts of the earth, and full of royal residences? It was not by chance that the Kings had chosen Loches and Chinon for their homes, those sweet retreats which had witnessed the first feelings of love, the early aspirations after glory of Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel.

It was more from necessity than from choice that Charles VII. resided at his Castle of Tournelles, situated in the middle of Paris, in that palace where the Kings, John, Charles V., and Charles VII., had lived. In order to gain as much popular favour as possible, the King raised again from their ruins most of the buildings which the civil war or neglect had destroyed:<sup>2</sup> to Charles VII, we owe a great number of these small turretted Bastilles, the ruins of which still

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<sup>1</sup> Monstrelet and Jean Chartier tell us this.

<sup>2</sup> Ordinance of Charles VII. *Collect. du Louvre*, 1441.

remain. Up to this reign, the castles of feudalism were gloomy, massive and built with thick walls, almost without windows or decoration. Paris now presented a varied aspect. I have before me a bird's-eye view of the city, street by street, houses and islands, in the reign of Charles VII., and the appearance presented is of the most charming and varied character.<sup>1</sup> The streets are narrow, it is true, but each block of houses stands by itself with trim plots and gardens, vine trellises, and fine vegetable enclosures. The town is crowded with churches and convents, fine mansions, so elegant that one would say they might be carried in the hand, as the stone statues of saints, set under porches, carry the models of Cathedrals on the tips of their fingers. There are only three bridges crossing the Seine, sheltered from the sun, rain, and wind; the pont Aux Meuniers is in the form of the Bridge of Sighs at Venice. Every house, even those of the middle classes, is adorned with emblematic figures, with gables and strangely-shaped water-spouts.

In the extreme south stands Sainte-Geneviève with its shrine surrounded by charming cottages, the gardens of which, planted with vines, stretch

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<sup>1</sup> The National Library is very poor in relief-plans of the cities of the Middle Ages. We must have recourse to private collections.

to the Bièvre ; on the Seine was Nôtre-Dame, the pride of the city, and, as if to present a contrast, the Châtelet, with its turrets, the bright Sainte-Chapelle of Saint-Louis, with its lofty spire, and the vast convent of the Augustine monks, the hôtel de Nesle ; farther off there are seen the charming Pré aux Clercs and the buildings of the University.

On the other bank of the river Seine, the Bastille, with its four towers, surrounded by a park and orchard, the royal residence of the Tournelles, with its small forests of cherry-trees, its vine trellises, where the muscatel grapes hang in beautiful clusters, the Rue Saint-Antoine, reserved for tournaments : Saint-Paul, Les Celestins, la Grève and the Louvre, from which, to the north, on the eminence that bordered on the beautiful factory of Venetian glazed tiles, could be seen the windmills that turned as the breeze shifted this way or that.

Such was Paris under Charles VII., where were seen passing and repassing processions of lords and ladies, on richly caparisoned horses, monks, black and white, armed men dressed in two colours, as they have been painted on cards and tarots, shopkeepers with their hoods, gypsies, pages, and varlets, long processions of pilgrims, walking to the sounds of the peals of bells, ringing out joyously at the prospect of a festival, but full of

sorrow and lamentation for the dead. There were none of those monotonous crowds, unbelieving and heartless, which are now crowded into our great towns, in the midst of a civilization that is worn out.

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XVIII.

**The Courts of Burgundy, Anjou and  
Provence. The Good King Rene, in the  
Fifteenth Century.**

The Court of Charles VII., even when superintended and arranged by Agnes Sorel in its pleasures and its chivalry, could never compare for splendour and magnificence with the Courts of Burgundy, Anjou and Provence, climates favoured of heaven. We may regard the Dukes of Burgundy as the last and fairest reflection of the spirit of chivalry and feudalism; the Treaty of Arras had still further increased their power of sovereignty; Dijon, their capital, a city of splendour in the fourteenth century, built its beautiful churches of Sainte Bénigne and of Saint Michel, and the palace of its Dukes. Time destroys everything, and the hand of man more than that of time. The stranger who visits Dijon to-day, with its look of nobility and seriousness still unchanged, is struck with the neglect of its antiquarian glory. Of the palace of the Dukes of Burgundy, there remains but one tower and

the ruins of a kitchen like those described by Homer, wherein, no doubt, was prepared the feudal peacock. In the Church of Sainte Bénigne I have seen old figures of knights and mitred abbots lying stretched on the flags of the cathedral, half effaced by the feet of visitors ; an outrage to the dead, to Art, and to history.<sup>1</sup>

Independently of the Duchy of Burgundy, with its beautiful capital, the Dukes possessed, besides, the county of Maçon, and of Charollais as far as the town of Auxerre, Franche-Comté and Flanders, with its rich but democratic and ill-regulated towns, the cities of the Somme, &c. Twenty-five leagues from Paris the colours of Burgundy were floating on the high towers of Amiens. The character of the Dukes of Burgundy was violent, proud, imperious, but relieved by a brilliant generosity ; they loved splendour, festivities, lists and tournaments, and, ever magnificent themselves, they were prodigal in their expenditure. At Bruges, at the time of the marriage of Duke John with Madame Isabelle of Portugal, the festivities were so splendid that the Flemings still

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<sup>1</sup> Dijon has kept its grave and magisterial character ; I appeal to the learning of its many scholars. In France there are many societies and inspectors of historical monuments, who make a great noise in the newspapers, but leave our national treasures to be ruined by neglect.

remember them. The burgesses, those unsurpassed beer drinkers, were astonished to see before the palace, on one side, a lion of pure gold, which, for a whole week, never ceased spouting a copious stream of Rhenish, and, on the other, a silver stag throwing out Beaune, Romanée and Malvoisie.<sup>1</sup>

While the Flemings got drunk at one of these feasts, which, in later times, Teniers so well reproduced, Duke John presided at a magnificent tournament in the court itself of the palace, where the bells pealed the most charming airs in honour of Flanders.

On this day was instituted the illustrious order of the Golden Fleece.<sup>2</sup> Some have sought the origin of this order in a mysterious and lascivious gift of love, presented by a lady of Bruges to Duke John.<sup>3</sup> It is more natural to believe that the fable of Jason and the conquest of the Golden Fleece—a fable reproduced and imitated by more than one rhymist—was the true source of the institution of this illustrious order of chivalry. In the terms of the statutes, everything is grave, and

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Monstrelet, *Chroniq. ann.*, 1430, with the *Annales de Flandres*, by Meyer.

<sup>2</sup> The statutes bear date 10th January, 1429; but as the year only began at Easter, we must read 1432.

<sup>3</sup> Favin, in the *Théâtre d'Honneur*, discusses with some detail the causes of the foundation of the order of the Golden Fleece.

religious. "We make known that, by reason of the great and perfect love which we bear to the noble estate and order of chivalry, the honour of which by our glowing and particular affection we wish to increase, in order that, by its means, the true Catholic faith, the state of our Holy Mother Church, the tranquility and prosperity of the commonwealth, may be, as much as possible, defended, guarded and preserved. On the tenth day of January, 1429, the day of the solemnisation at Bruges of the marriage between us and our very dear and dearly-beloved spouse, Elizabeth, we have instituted and created an order and fraternity or amicable association of knights, which it is our wish to call the Golden Fleece, conquered by Jason."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it was the idea of the Golden Fleece, Jason's conquest, which had inspired this new order of chivalry<sup>2</sup> under the great mastership of the Duke of Burgundy. Each knight wore a scarlet mantle lined with varied coloured furs, and took, like a monk to an abbot, the oath of obedience to the grand-master. At this period of chivalry and honour, people had reached the point, at the Court

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<sup>1</sup> The number of the knights of the Golden Fleece could not exceed thirty.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Chansons de Geste*, Jason is regarded as the model of knighthood.

of Burgundy, of indulging in fanciful vows, which were sworn in feudal feasts, over the golden pheasant or the heron. One engaged never to sleep in a soft bed until he had conquered twenty knights; another, never to touch or kiss a woman's dress before breaking ten lances in single combat, or taking a towered fort. This faith in himself on the part of the knight, and these legends of courage, might introduce a certain disorder into the regular life of a nation, but they begat a confidence in great enterprises; they formed the beauty-spot in the character of the people, and Froissart depicts the noble scene of knights going to affix their shield to the old oak of Charlemagne, and to proclaim the beauty and honour of women in the face of all coming.

The institution of the order of the Golden Fleece was almost contemporaneous with the greatest disaster of the Christian era, the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. Let one imagine the effect that must have been produced by the fall of the Greek empire, scarcely two centuries after the crusades. Even when nations are asleep, there are certain events that awake them with a start, with despair in their heart and shame on their brow. For a century the Popes, those protectors of Christian society, had sought to prevent this catastrophe by calling kings and their peoples to arms against the hordes that were invading

Europe.<sup>1</sup> They had been scarcely listened to; the Byzantines had lost themselves in vain disputes; the capture of Constantinople resounded like a clap of thunder, and while Charles VII., to please the universities, promulgated the act of opposition to the Holy See of Rome, called the *Pragmatic Sanction*, the Duke of Burgundy offered, himself and all his knighthood, to march against the infidels.<sup>2</sup>

The "Vow of the Heron" on this occasion had for its object the accomplishment of the crusade against the infidels:<sup>3</sup> the Duke of Burgundy was to place himself at the head of this expedition, the purpose of which was to hurl the Turks back into Asia.

These same exalted feelings of chivalry rose to a very high point in the house of Anjou, and especially in the imagination of that prince whom Provence still fondly calls by the name of the "good King René."<sup>4</sup> An enthusiastic artist, he

<sup>1</sup> Continuation of Baronius, *ad ann.* 1440-50.

<sup>2</sup> The true character of the Pragmatic Sanction has been pointed out in the author's book on the *Church in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>3</sup> "The Vow of the Heron" (see *ante*) has been published by MM. de Sainte-Palaye at the end of their *Memoire sur la Chevalerie*.

<sup>4</sup> Compare the portraits of Tristan and Trois-Echelles in *Quentin Durward*, and of René in *Anne of*

painted pictures, glasses, and the portraits of those whom he loved ; a good musician, he composed all the airs for festival and tourney ; when a captive of the Dukes of Burgundy, he had been taken by the tournaments and pomps of chivalry. The Bibliothèque Nationale has a splendid illuminated manuscript entitled : "Les Tournois du Roi René."<sup>1</sup> There is nothing like it for splendour and richness of colouring : we there see depicted the rough encounter of knights, each bearing his distinctive coat of arms : the lances are crossed ! the shock is terrible ! See the number of knights unhorsed ! What huge horses richly caparisoned ! The tournaments of King René are a theatre of honour and courage. This society lived only in such ideas ; it was strangely mixed, like the fantastic ornaments that deck illuminated missals ; at the bottom of all hearts was the belief that gives a colouring to everything, the fair epic of a future life, of heaven and of hell. Existence was in God.

Good King René had an imaginative soul, and

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*Geierstein*, with those drawn by Capefigue, here and on page 34-

<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of the miniatures of the Middle Ages, the manuscript of King René's tournaments is one of the most splendid treasures of this Library. It enables us to perceive the dawn of Italian Art.

the town of Aix owes to him the beautiful representation of that mystery which still preserves the name of the *Jeux du Roi René*. Provence, in the month of May, is permeated with a thousand perfumed odours of flowers, rose, broom and thyme; and the celebration of the Fête Dieu<sup>1</sup> takes place with magnificent ceremonies under its bright unclouded sky. Along with these holy rites, King René, ever an artist, instituted a fête which lasted five days, and had the whole of the city of Aix for its scene. King David was there represented, surrounded by fiends, male and female; Innocence, protected by an angel all clad in white; the golden calf, worshipped by all (a symbol of the society which was to be); graceful dancers, playing on the flute and tambourine to an air which the King himself had composed; the three wise men; the massacre of the innocents; Saint Christopher, the representative of the Giants, and spirited horses prancing around him.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Celebrated in honour of the Holy Sacrament.

<sup>2</sup> King René was a poet: he has left some ballads; one of them is the *Conquête de la douce Mercy*. His illuminated book bears the title, *Traité des Tournois*. A great man, one of the distinguished leaders of the Restoration of 1815, the Count Villeneuve de Bargemont, Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, who has specially studied the history of King René, has written thereon in the Provençal dialect.

This mystery was represented before Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel during a journey they made to Sainte Baume. It had to be repeated each year at the Fête Dieu. René was always happy when living at his good city of Aix or in his little country house of Marseilles, where the warm sun causes the cicada<sup>1</sup> to sing, as it does under the sycamores at Athens. He had an affection for those walls where the salamander drinks in the rays of the sun, and shelters itself under the tender leaves of the Italian jessamine or under the golden ball of the scented cassia, near wells, true African cisterns. What inhabitant of Provence does not bless the name of the good King René? Which of them has not been to see his country house, called *La Rose*, with its charming situation on the banks of the Jarret? What child has not glanced through the pages of the book the *Fête de Dieu du Roi René*, with its old engravings of somewhat fantastical costumes of the time of Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel, borrowed from the cards and *tarots* of this period? In the fifteenth century a revolu-

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<sup>1</sup> *Cicada*, which is commonly rendered "a grasshopper," is affirmed by naturalists to be an insect of a far different make, and peculiar to hot countries, usually sitting on trees, and singing so loud that it may be heard afar off. The French *cigale* means both cicada and locusta, the latter being the correct rendering of grasshopper. (See Ainsworth.)

tion took place in art; paintings assumed the brilliant hues of carmine, gold and azure. The landscapes are most charming; the flowers, on which little birds are seen ensconced, seem almost as if plucked yesterday. Here we have rural pieces, grapes hanging from vines, with wells and almond trees. There, again, we see the cell of the good hermit, with the flocks sporting round those fair-faced shepherds and shepherdesses, such as Froissart has described in his great Chronicles.

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XIX.

**Last years of Agnes Sorel. Her death.**

(1440-1450.)

Agnes Sorel had exiled herself from the court of Charles VII. after the conquest of Normandy, at the time when popular feeling against her influence made itself felt. Although some brave knights assumed her badge and defended her beauty, yet all those who, on the contrary, wished to rule the feeble Charles, that is, the Dauphin, the Captains of the armed bands, the Scottish Counts and Dukes, who were always exacting in their demands, had declared themselves against her, and Agnes Sorel had withdrawn to her Castle of Loches. Sometimes she resided at the *Manoir de Beauté*, on the Marne, where the king came to visit her in secret, and even to consult her on the

affairs of his realm. From general admission we know that Agnes Sorel had preserved a vigorous resolution and a firmness of judgment which were unsurpassed, and, above all, that chivalrous spirit which impelled Charles VII., with all his irresolution, towards strong and courageous measures.

Nothing regarding the life of Agnes Sorel during her last days would have come down to us, had a faithful chronicler, Jean Chartier,<sup>1</sup> not taken care to relate, from personal knowledge, almost the entire life of Agnes, whom he had seen and known. Speaking of the conquest of Normandy and the capture of Rouen, Jean Chartier says: "In the Abbey of Jumièges<sup>2</sup> the king found a fair maiden, whose name was *Belle Agnes*, who had come there, as she said, to warn the King, and tell him that some of his people wished to betray him and give him into the hands of his old enemies, the English;<sup>3</sup> of which the King took no notice and did nought but laugh, and by reason that the said Agnes had been in the Queen's service for the space of five years or thereabouts,

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Chartier, who must not be confounded with the poet Alain Chartier, wrote a chronicle on the reign of Charles VII.

<sup>2</sup> The Abbey of Jumièges was one of the gems of Anglo-Norman Architecture.

<sup>3</sup> The English had always numerous supporters in Normandy.

in which she had had every kind of worldly pleasure, and all the pastimes and amusements that were known, that is to say, to wear splendid finery, ornaments, dresses, furs, necklaces of gold and precious stones, and having there all other pleasures, as became her youth and beauty<sup>1</sup> wherefore it was a common saying that the King kept and entertained her, for to-day the world is more inclined to speak evil than good . . . although it was often against the wish of the King that the said Agnes Sorel lived in such high state, but it was her own pleasure : wherefore he winked at it as much as he could ; and when the King went to see the ladies of the Court, especially in the absence of the queen, there was always a large multitude of people present, and never did they see her touched by the King below the chin, but she withdrew after the lawful pastimes, as became a King's Court : and each went to his own apartment at night, and likewise the said Agnes to hers."

Thus the chronicler seeks to explain and justify the relations subsisting between Charles VII. and Agnes Sorel. However, the simple narrator is led into making some avowals : " And that if the said Agnes did anything wrong, if she had any culpable relations with the King, of which no

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<sup>1</sup> Agnes Sorel's love of jewels was well known.

one could obtain any proof, they were always entered into with caution and secretly, she being at that time in the service of the Queen of Sicily before she was in that of the Queen of France, with whom she resided for some years. The publication of these evil reports and the scandal occasioned having come to the knowledge of the said Agnes, who was called Madame de Beauté, she was so saddened and displeased that she shewed great contrition and repentance for her sins : she remembered Mary Magdalene, who was also a great sinner.<sup>1</sup> When falling ill she called on God and the Virgin Mary to come to her aid ; then, like a good Catholic, after receiving the Sacrament she asked for her prayer book to read the verses of Saint Bernard, which she had written with her own hand, and made the noble Jacques Cœur her testamentary executor, along with Robert Félicien, the Queen's doctor, and Master Stephen Chevalier, the King's secretary and treasurer. She ordained that the King alone, and in every way should have the control of these three persons. The said Agnes declared to all her maids that our frail flesh was an odious and disgusting thing, and expressed her regrets to the said Master Denis, her confessor, that she might receive absolution from him. Then after raising

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<sup>1</sup> Hence her pilgrimage to Saint-Baume.

very loud cries, calling on and invoking the blessed Virgin Mary, her soul left her body on Monday, the 11th day of February 1449, at six o'clock in the afternoon, and her body being afterwards opened, her heart was taken to the said Abbey. As regards her body it was taken up and carried for burial to Loches, where the ceremony of sepulture took place with all pomp in the College Church of Notre Dame, which she had enriched with many foundations and gifts. May God grant mercy to her soul. Amen."<sup>1</sup>

Such is the short account given of the life of Agnes Sorel by the pious chronicler, Master Jean Chartier, who finds an excuse for her profane amours in the sanctity of her death. The abbey in which the noble Dame de Beauté died is Jumièges, that finest gem of Anglo-Norman architecture which to-day lies in ruins amid its broken columns, its mutilated figures of saints scattered around, its crumbling tracery, with its sacred chapels, its fountains and its piscinæ destroyed! Jumièges, that existed in the days of William the Conqueror, and the mitred abbot of which issued the ban of excommunication against Robert the Devil! Again, in the history of the abbey of

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<sup>1</sup> The Chronicles of Jean Chartier have often been printed.

Jumièges we find these words :<sup>1</sup> "Charles VII. had been at Jumièges for six weeks when Agnes Sorel was prostrated by an acute attack of dysentery, of which she died at the farm of Mesnil, a dependency of the said abbey, on the 9th day of February 1449, at six o'clock at night, aged forty years."

The few charters that have escaped the hand of time tell us "that Agnes Sorel bequeathed thirty crowns to the Church of Saint Aspar de Melun, and 2000 gold pieces to Notre Dame de Loches, the place of her burial, for a daily service to be celebrated in the said church." Thus the name of Aumôneuse, which she commonly receives in the Chronicles, was well merited.

It has been said that Agnes Sorel died from the effects of poison, and the indictment of Jacques Cœur included this among the crimes with which the royal silversmith was charged. But can there be the slightest truth in such an accusation, when we remember that in her will Agnes Sorel names Jacques Cœur among the executors of her last wishes? All the life of the Dame de Beauté mingled with that of the royal silversmith, her most faithful friend, and the treasurer of her savings, who furnished her with the most beautiful

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<sup>1</sup> A Norman archæologist of great fame has issued a remarkable work on the abbey of Jumièges: the drawings were made by Mlle. Langlois, his daughter. 1826-27.

gems and diamonds and the splendid stuffs that formed her dresses : besides, could there be any symptoms or suspicion of poisoning in an illness that lasted forty days? This accusation of poisoning, whenever the great are cut down by death, is a meaningless but common hypothesis in history.

Agnes Sorel, to whom the name of *Dame de Beauté* was henceforth given as a charming nickname, left three daughters, who made good marriages ; the first, Charlotte, was married to Charles de Brézé ; the second, called Marie, to Olivier de Créqui ; and lastly, the third, Jeanne, to Antoine de Bueil. Jacques Cœur erected to her memory the tomb which was long seen in the church of Loches. On it these sad words were written : *Oh ! mort, toujours inflexible, tu as arraché de la vie un si beau corps dans ses plus jeunes années.*<sup>1</sup> Graves in churches, tombs scattered over the pavements with reflections on death and future life, leave a lasting impression on visitors. There was no more beautiful shelter for the dead than the church vaults, which taught a severe lesson to those who lived in the midst of luxury and debauchery ; so much beauty, so much grace abandoned to the worms of the tomb ! The

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<sup>1</sup> There have been several recent discussions about the family of Agnes Sorel. Her portrait may be found in the *Collection des Gravures*. (Bibliothèque Nat.)

name of Agnes Sorel survived her fortune; she was the object of invocations two centuries after.

The poet Baïf,<sup>1</sup> who paid a visit to the farm of La Ferté Mesnil, the scene of Agnes Sorel's death, wrote this sad ballad on the Dame de Beauté:

Mais la ! Elle ne put rompre la destinée  
Qui pour trancher ses jours l'avait ici menée  
Où la mort la surprit. . . .

O mort ! cette beauté  
Devait par sa douceur flechir ta cruauté ;  
Mais la lui ravissant à la fleur de son âge  
Si grand que tu cuidais n'a esté ton outrage,  
Car si elle eût fourni l'entier nombre de jours  
Que lui pouvait donner de nature le cours,  
Ses beaux traits, son beau teint et sa belle charnure  
De la tarde vieillesse allait subir l'injure  
Et le surnom de belle avecque sa beauté  
Lui fust pour tout jamais par les hommes ostés ;  
Mais jusques à sa mort l'ayant vue toujours telle,  
Ne pouvait lui oster le surnom de belle.<sup>2</sup>

Baïf lived in the reign of Henry II. and Charles IX. ; the traditions of Francis the First on the Dame de Beauté, which that prince had placed above "*les nonains et les dévots hermites pour France recouvrer*," were collected. The services, indeed, which she rendered to the King

<sup>1</sup> Jean Antoine de Baïf, the friend of Ronsard, published many poems. The first edition of his works is dated Paris, 1572 and 1573.

<sup>2</sup> This thought has been imitated by Malherbe in those celebrated lines addressed to his friend Duperrier, on the death of his daughter.

and to France were of great importance : Agnes had decided Charles VII. on his patriotic crusade against England : she had made him shake off the troublesome yoke of the undisciplined captains of the Great Companies, and instead raise up a regular and stable government, which would give force and impulse to the poor monarchy of the Kinglet of Bourges. Agnes Sorel dominates the history of Charles VII.'s reign ; Joan of Arc was but an episode of it.

A right consideration of the legend of Joan of Arc shews us that the Maid of Orleans exercised but a transient influence on the destinies of Charles VII.'s monarchy ; hers was but one of those camp legends destined to raise the sinking courage of soldiers. Agnes Sorel, with the help of Jacques Cœur, reconciled the King to the great feudatories of Brittany and Burgundy, and to the House of Anjou, which henceforth were the mainstay of his cause : strengthened by this assistance, Charles VII. entered Paris again, reconquered Normandy and Guienne, and finally delivered the territory from the hateful presence of the English. Still, the legend of the Maid of Orleans has remained with us, and is better loved, more celebrated and much more popular than that of Agnes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In these latter days some systematic historians have given an extraordinary extension to the legend of

The former was connected with a holy mysticism, a wonderfully romantic life ; an inspired daughter of the people, leading the King to Rheims to have him crowned, formed an episode capable of appealing to the imagination of the fifteenth century, while on the other hand the career of Agnes Sorel never went beyond the simple conditions of chivalry, and even, perhaps, of politics. This is just what we frequently find in history ; we attribute to a wonderful accident something that is but the result of a combination, the action of which has been prepared by events. It will be noticed that after the siege of Paris by the men-at-arms under Joan of Arc, the standard of France remained quite as low as before the consecration of the King at Rheims. The Maid had even fallen into the hands of the English ! Discouragement was as profound as ever in the camp of Charles VII. ! Who, then, was it that revived the courage of all ? Who was it that made the bewildered monarch take energetic resolutions ? Who gave him the wise advice to negotiate with the great feudatories of Brittany and Burgundy ? And at last, when the King was restored, who was it that urged him against the English in Normandy and Guienne ?

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the Maid of Orleans ; democracy has even been traced to her,

The modern soldier's song,

"Il faut partir, Agnes l'ordonne,"

is but an adaptation of the verses of Francis the First, a connaisseur in honour and courage!<sup>1</sup>

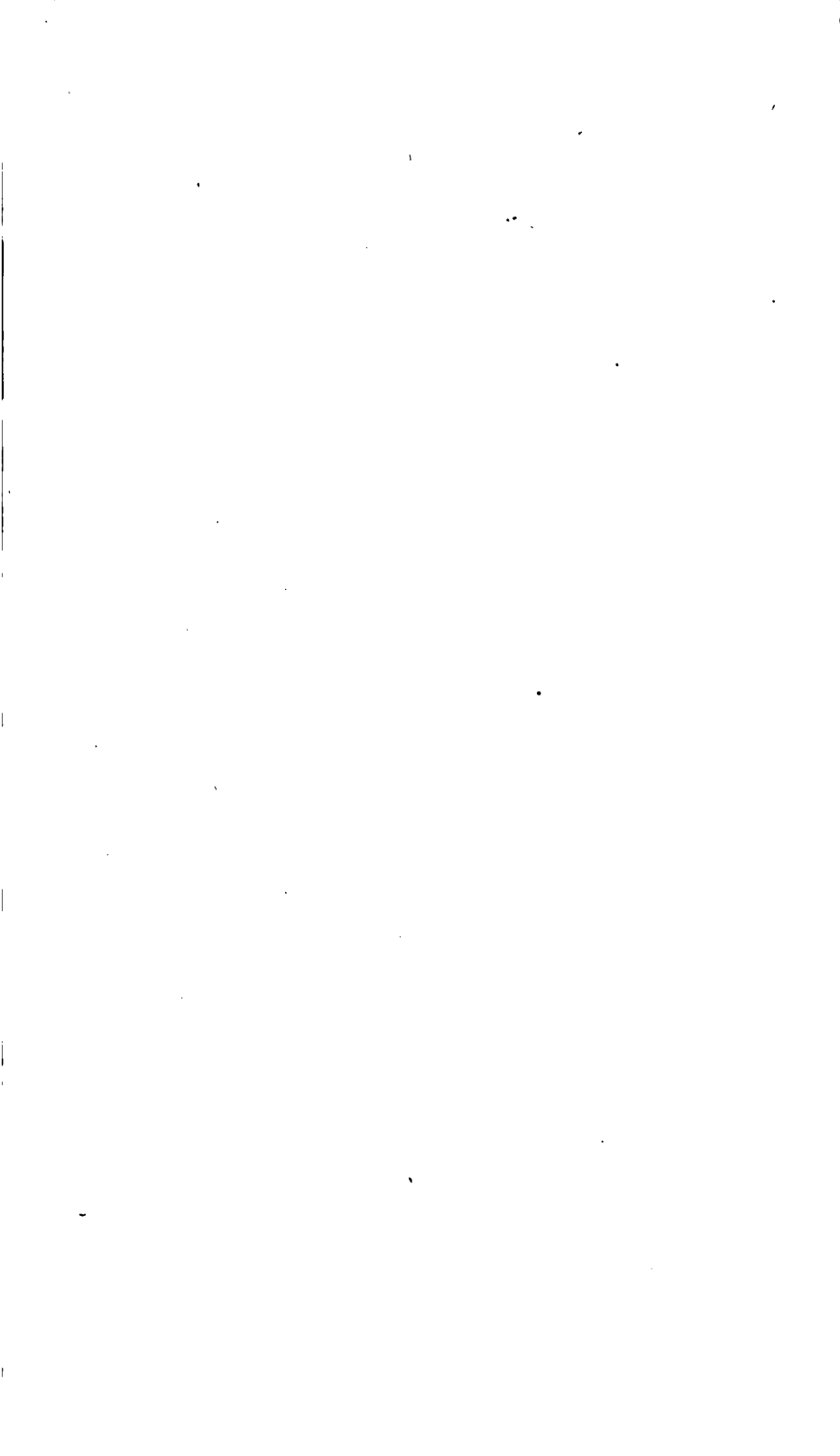
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<sup>1</sup>The foregoing is as close a translation as possible of that part of M. Capefigue's first volume of the "Reines de la main gauche" which relates to Agnes Sorel.

The remainder of the volume consists of a literary criticism of the historians of the period, Froissard, Monstrelet and Jean Chartier, together with a sketch of the history of the early years of the reign of Louis XI., and quotations from Voltaire's "Pucelle d'Orléans;" all of which, in the opinion of a well-known critic, weakens the effect produced by the author's life-like picture of a very obscure period of history.

THE END.

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